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CHRIST AND EVERYDAY LIFE

W. EDWARD CHADWICK, D.D., B.Sc.

"PREACHERS OF TO-DAY"

EDITED BY

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CHRIST AND EVERYDAY LIFE

BY

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Vicar of St. Giles', Northampton

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"THE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS OF CHRISTIANITY"

"THE PASTORAL TEACHING OF ST. PAUL"

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FOREWORD

THE preacher has been wisely told that he should

(1) Preach Christ;

(2) Use the methods of exposition;

(3) Deal with the difficulties and needs of the present.

It is hoped that in the following sermons this counsel has not been forgotten.

W. E. C.

ST. GILES' VICARAGE,
NORTHAMPTON, *September* 1910.

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questions? Surely the one word "life" is a sufficient reply to them all? Is not life the one subject of all Christian teaching and study? Is not life the one object of every kind of Christian effort?

From time to time in the course of His ministry our Lord briefly, yet quite comprehensively expressed, by means of some pregnant phrase, His whole purpose and object. For instance, in the hearing of the Pharisees, He said it was "for judgment" that He came into this world. Then He told Pilate that He came "to bear witness of the truth." But never more fully or completely did our Lord express the whole purpose of His mission than in these words of the text—"I came that they may have life."

To-day is a day of analysis, and the present age has quite rightly been described as an age of criticism. We are busily engaged in analysing and criticising everything—from the chemical elements to the sources of history, tradition, and religion, that is of both Christianity and other faiths. Last, but not least, we are subjecting human nature and human life to a very searching analysis. To-day we are not content to speak of "life"; we speak of physical or natural life, of intellectual, moral, social, and religious life.

It may be that all this process of dissection

is necessary. It may be that as complete as possible an analysis must precede a satisfactory synthesis. It may be that all these divisions and subdivisions, with their various definitions, are essential for clearness of thought. But it is certainly a relief to turn to the comprehensive—shall I term it the synthetic?—method of Jesus. And the more we meditate upon this, the more surely do we see His wisdom in gathering up the various forms of vital energy—whether they be of one nature or not—under the single term "life." Our Lord surveys man as he is in this world. He also sees man's various needs. The greatest of all these needs, the most fundamental of all, Christ calls life. Of this some people have very little, others have more; but, if we interpret the term widely, can we say that any one has as much as he should have, as much as he might have? To supply men with life is then the object of Christ.

It has been well said that if you consider the life of either an individual or a society, there are three elements or factors in it which should be possessed in large measure: the life should be full of duty, full of joy, full of purpose. I do not lay stress on the order of these qualities, though this is perhaps the most convenient order in which to consider them.

But what is meant here by the duty, the joy, and the purpose of life? I think that the *duty* of life is to do all the good that is possible, and "to do with thy might whatsoever thy hand findeth to do"; in other words, it is to be sympathetic, earnest, and enthusiastic over the highest and widest utility which lies within our power. The *joy* of life lies in the full and free, yet proper and self-disciplined exercise of all life's powers and energies. The purpose of life is just life itself, only more and fuller life.

Here we may see the superiority of life, of all that life implies, of all that issues from life—including especially character—over all inanimate objects. Because, in regard to life, means and end, instrument and purpose, method and result, effort and object, cannot be dissevered.

Let us consider life in some of its aspects or elements—I mean as physical, intellectual, moral, social, or spiritual. It will be seen that, in regard to each of these, what I have been saying is wholly true. Take physical life: With what object does the athlete take physical exercise, but that he may increase the strength, the speed, the agility which he already possesses? And more strength or more speed surely means just more physical life. Why do we train the young by intellectual effort? Surely to add to their

intellectual powers, that they may be capable of increased intellectual effort in the future. No clear thinker to-day confounds education with the amassing of erudition. But he knows that greater intellectual strength and clearness are important qualities of the educated man. Why does Christianity lay such stress upon moral self-discipline, but in order to increase the power of this same virtue, in order that it may always be at the service of the well-instructed conscience? What is the true object of social life? Surely that by social intercourse, by mutual service willingly rendered, by the interchange of knowledge and thought, the life of each individual may be enlarged and enriched. Why should we seek spiritual life by close communion with God, but in order that by this communion growing closer and closer, a richer supply of the Divine life may flow into our lives, and we may be more fit to do the work in the world to which God has called us? Wherefore do we come to God's holy house of prayer? Surely in order to employ and to offer the best and highest elements of our life in the worship of God; and that by prayer and meditation upon His holy word we may more fully realise the presence of His life in our own.

How important it is that we should test our

own life, our methods of life, the aim and purpose of our life, by the life, the methods, the purpose of Christ! We should read again and again the great prayer of Christ in the seventeenth chapter of St. John—a prayer both of intercession and sanctification. We must notice that as Christ then stood between the disciples (the Church in embryo) and the Father, so to-day the Church and the individual Christian must stand between the world and Christ. Christ came that out of the eternal and inexhaustible "Well of Life" He might give life; so must we, from the life we have received from Him, bestow His life upon men. His purpose must be ours: hence each one of us should be able to say of our own life purpose, I came, and I am striving that those around me may have life.

Many years ago religion became strongly individualistic. I would not for a moment underrate the importance, I would rather speak of the necessity, of cultivating individual knowledge and individual holiness, that is, of making individual effort after the closest personal communion with God in Christ; for by these means we largely obtain that supply of life which it is our duty to bestow. But if we study the lives of some so-called religious people, we might imagine that the text read, I am come

into the world that *I* may have life, that I may secure as much life as possible for myself. By these people life here is apparently regarded only as an opportunity of making themselves as sure as possible of heaven hereafter. But this is not the teaching of Christ.

Let us for a moment consider the duty of life, the joy of life, and the purpose of life in the light of that teaching. In that light what is the highest duty of life? It is certainly not personal acquisition, but the rendering of the fullest service that lies within our power; it is also the bestowing upon others the fullest possible opportunity of rendering that service. To enable men to do this Christ taught and healed; but also, and this was His most important work of all, He transformed their characters from sin to holiness. In the light of Christ's teaching what is the joy of life? It does not consist in thinking how much we have obtained. Does it not rather consist in inspiring others with life? Is it not found in awakening others to high ideals? Indeed, is it not the highest happiness to struggle, and to encourage others to struggle, after those ideals? What, again, in the light of Christ's teaching, is the end or purpose of life? Is it not to bestow life upon others, to impart to others that deep, personal, experimental know-

ledge of God, which we have received through our own personal communion with God, which communion is the essence of eternal life?

In each of these instances you will see that we have risen out of the thought of individual life to that of social life, to life, that is, with others. And, while the whole life of a society is something more than the sum of the separate amounts of life possessed by each of the members, a full social life depends on each member thinking of bestowing rather than of obtaining life; it depends on each bringing liberally to the common store of life; it does not consist in each, as is so often the case, trying to draw from the common fund for personal enrichment.

What does experience teach us when we notice how life is being used all round us? Do we not find life being wasted, or perhaps rather stolen, by both rich and poor, by the luxurious, the idler, the drunkard, the sensualist, the gambler, the mere pleasure-seeker? All these are diseased members of the social body; they act like evil parasites, feeding upon it; they are draining away its life. It has been very truly said that one test of the rightness or wrongness of an action or course of conduct is whether it adds to, or detracts from, life. It is because of its destructiveness of life that every form of

selfishness must be condemned. Our Lord teaches quite clearly that it is not necessary to take away the whole of life in order to break the sixth commandment; he who maims a life or diminishes in any way the life of another has broken that commandment. Indeed, each of the last six commandments may be regarded as a law for the protection of some form or some part of life; for each commandment is directed against some particular kind of selfishness.

If we consider the conditions under which some of the very poor are to-day compelled to live—with want of work, by sweated labour, with housing conditions under which physical and moral health are well-nigh impossible—if we consider these conditions must we not pronounce them destructive of life? Therefore to improve these conditions, which is to add to life, is surely a Christian task.

We are sometimes asked for a test which we may apply to various kinds of work,—to projects, institutions, and movements,—a test by which we may decide whether these are "Christian" or not, whether they can, or cannot be regarded as fulfilling the purpose of Christ. I believe that this test will be found the most comprehensive of all—Does the work or the movement or the institution tend to increase or to diminish life,

does it tend to give or to take away life? Or we might express the test thus—Does it tend to enlarge the opportunities and to increase the means of life, and will it tend to destroy the enemies of life?

Only in applying any of these tests we must be careful to give to the word "life" as wide an interpretation as Christ Himself gave to it. To realise how wide this was we must study the instances in which Christ uses it in the Gospels. No merely physical, or intellectual, or moral, not even a merely spiritual interpretation of the term, is by itself sufficient. "I came that they may have life." Let us think what we owe to Christ, what we owe to His teaching and His inspiration, but also to His redemptive work on our behalf. To the well-instructed Christian, "life" must mean nothing less than *all* we owe to Christ. It means all that the Atonement implies. It means forgiveness of sins and perfect communion with God in Christ. It is only when we remember all this that we can grasp the infinite value of life.

II

CHRIST AND TOIL

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."—ST. MATT. xi. 28–30.

FROM the day these words were first spoken—that is during nearly nineteen hundred years—they have gone home to the hearts of countless men and women. There is no saying, even among those of Christ Himself, that makes a wider appeal; for the appeal made by this gracious invitation is as wide as the human race. It has been well said, that he who understands these words has found his way to the very heart of Christianity, which here is only another term for the loving heart of Jesus Christ.

Two reasons for the universality of their appeal are at once evident. First, their fulness of sympathy, due to the depth and breadth of their insight into human needs. Who is there among

us that, when toiling and feeling overburdened, does not long for sympathy? And how many among us there are to whom, from time to time, that which should be simply work has become labour, indeed even exhausting toil! At such times the burden we have to bear seems too heavy for our strength. Of course, to different natures and in different circumstances the burden will be of a different kind; but in every case, if it is heavy, it taxes our strength, it impedes our progress, and we long either for its complete removal or for more adequate ability to bear it. Be our burden what it may, the sympathetic invitation, indeed promise, of the text cannot fail to touch us: "Come unto Me, all that toil and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

A second reason why the words appeal to us is owing to their tone of authority, which is nothing less than Divine. Tens of thousands of men and women have felt such a confidence in Christ's promise that they have responded to His invitation, and they have found their confidence more than justified. But, were the words uttered by one who was merely a Galilean peasant of some thirty years of age, or are they the authoritative advice of the Great Divine Physician by Whom all the diseases of our souls may be healed?

The answer to this question is given by experience. What do we ask of the physician? First, a true insight into the nature of our affliction; secondly, ability to alleviate, if not entirely to banish, our suffering. For nearly nineteen hundred years men and women have gone with their sufferings and afflictions to Christ; they have sought in Him such qualifications as were necessary for their removal, and they have not sought in vain.

Let us now look into Christ's words more closely, and let us try to find out exactly what they imply. "Come unto *Me*." Here, as so often, Christ says nothing of instruments or systems; He uses no technical terms or authorised formulæ; He says nothing about external means of grace, or about traditional methods of living the life that should be. He just makes an offer—one qualified by a single condition. He offers Himself; and He demands complete faith or trust in Himself. His only, yet all-sufficient offer of help to all who are toiling in weariness or exhaustion, to all who are burdened to the very limit of endurance, is contained in the one word, "Myself." That is all. But do we quite realise the immensity of the claim which Christ makes? The more we think over it, the more we are driven to

agree that, "Truly never man spake as this Man."

And who are those He bids come to Him? First, all who labour; or, perhaps more correctly, all who are toiling. Take the three words—"work," "labour," "toil." They mark a gradation, for there are times and circumstances when work becomes labour, and when labour passes into toil. Work is natural for all; it is good for all; idleness, whether voluntary or enforced, is an evil, and often becomes a curse. In one sense work is the Divine as well as the human portion, for Christ said, "My Father worketh until now and I work." It has thus the stamp of the Divine approval and of the Divine example upon it. And we must be careful to notice that "work" is a term of wide application. I dislike that term "the working classes"; for, as usually applied, it makes a false distinction. The brain-worker may earn his livelihood as honestly, and be as justly entitled to his reward, as the hand-worker. And both kinds of work may easily pass into labour, and so the term "labouring-man," as connoting a hard worker, may be as much a misnomer as "working-man." It may be inevitable that sometimes work should become labour, but not nearly so often as is the case to-day. At present some are over-

employed and others are under-employed; while many have no employment at all. For this the community—which includes each one of us—is, at least in part, to blame. There may be in some a grasping spirit which, in order to make more gain than is necessary, causes them to work longer hours than is good; and actually in consequence many may be under-employed. Then, at any rate a considerable proportion of those altogether unemployed are so from preventable causes—causes, that is, which are due either to their own fault or that of the community. They either have not qualified themselves, or have not been allowed to qualify themselves, or, through economic arrangements which could be altered, they are not permitted, to do work which needs to be done. If men would come to Christ, if they would learn from Him the need of thoughtfulness, industry, and justice—three qualities of His own nature—many of these wrongs might be abolished.

And labour not infrequently passes into painful toil. When it does so, it is usually because the evils which I have just mentioned have become intensified. On the one hand, we find some whose every energy is absorbed in the desire to get rich—"who rise up early and sit down late and eat the bread of painfulness." On the

other hand, we find the multitudes of poor "sweated" workers, who often *toil* from morning to night to earn a wage which is insufficient to maintain themselves and those dependent on them in mere physical efficiency. The rich, painfully toiling to get richer, are sinning against righteousness; the primary quality of Christ's character. The toiling underpaid workers are the victims of a system which contradicts all the principles of Christ. If the first would come to Christ He would bid them cease to *toil* after that from which there is no ultimate satisfaction. If the oppressed poor appeal to those who profess to represent Christ's cause, and these are not doing their utmost to put an end to conditions which contradict every law of Christ's Kingdom (which they are pledged to establish), then their profession of Christianity is but a mockery and a sham. We are all to some extent responsible for social evils and social injustices; and one day, together with the oppressed, we must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.

But Christ calls not only those who labour or toil; He also bids those who are burdened or heavy laden to come to Him. As the idea of toil refers to what we may call the active side of life, to what we do or attempt to do, so

the term heavy laden or burdened refers to the passive side, to that which we bear or endure. Frequently, alas! this latter is a condition added to, or even responsible for, the former. We may be toiling while we are heavy laden, or our work may actually be toil because while we work we have also to bear a heavy burden. If we consider the burdens of life they fall into two classes: we may term these the self-imposed and the inevitable; those which are due, and those which are not due, to our own actions. And many of us would be surprised, after a strict self-examination, to find how large a proportion of the whole of our burdens the self-imposed ones are. We may not like to confess this, but still it is true. The burdens imposed by carelessness and thoughtlessness, by sin in the present and in the past, by the force of evil habits which have been allowed to grow unchecked, by our declining to exercise self-discipline and by our refusing to submit to the wise discipline of others—all these various *not* inevitable burdens will be found to outweigh and outnumber the burdens which are really outside our own control.

And what is Christ's word, what is His promise to both those toiling and those burdened? He does not say, I will take from you the necessity

for work, nor does He say, I will entirely remove your burdens from you. Here, as generally, Christ seeks to effect a change in the nature as well as in the condition of those He calls. What He says is, I will so deal with you that you may recover your strength which you feel is giving out. Refreshment is both more and less than rest, and such is what Christ promises. Toil shall once more become stimulating and healthful work, and the crushing burden of anxiety shall be no more than that feeling of responsibility which it is good for all to bear.

Christ further tells us how He will accomplish this for us. "Take My yoke upon you," He says, "and learn from Me"; and He further adds, as possibly indicating the source of no small share or proportion of both our toil and our burden, "For I am meek and lowly in heart." He lays stress upon the yoke, because that is the means or instrument whereby the burden must be borne; and upon the nature and the adjustment of the yoke will the ease with which the weight is carried to a great extent depend. Christ's yoke is that of the meek and lowly in mind; for here, as so often in the New Testament, the word "heart" has its old Hebrew significance. We have only to think how much of the toil in the world, and how much of the anxiety, arises

from pride and ambition; from the pride which urges us to vie with, and from the ambition which is always urging us to try to excel in outward and material circumstances, those among whom we live. We have only to think of this to see how much refreshment we might obtain by taking upon ourselves the yoke of a meek and humble mind. Lowliness or humility of mind is not far removed from what Christ in another place calls "poverty of spirit." And to both the "poor in spirit" and the "meek" He predicates blessedness: for to the one belongs the Kingdom of Heaven, the other "shall inherit the earth."

The result of taking upon ourselves Christ's yoke in the place of a self-chosen yoke or of one imposed by the world shall be no mere rest for the body, it shall be rest for the soul. And here by rest is meant that refreshment which comes both from the inspiration and rule of Christ's spirit, and also from ceasing to be overburdened with all that a false pride binds as a galling yoke upon us. And how sweet and attractive are Christ's closing words! "My yoke is easy"—it has nothing harsh, nor fretting, nor galling about it —and "My burden"—a burden which it is the appointed lot of every human being to bear—"is light"; it is so to those who come to Christ, because He furnishes the necessary strength to bear it.

I have left one thought to the end, for it is the complement to the thought with which I began. I began by considering the words, "Come unto Me"; I would end by asking you to consider the words, "Learn of Me." The first invitation is one to absolute trust, the second is one to steady, persevering, self-sacrificing discipleship. We cannot learn of Christ till we have come to Him and offered ourselves to Him in perfect trust. But having come, we must abide with Him in order that we may continue to learn from Him. Both attitudes are incompatible with pride, which tempts to self-trust, and which is also a bar to that humility, that meekness, and that lowliness of mind which is essential to true discipleship.

We must remember that this learning must persist. It implies the perseverance, by which alone we win our souls, by which we win them for a precious possession, and it is perhaps of all Christian virtues the hardest to acquire.

We would be free from toil, free from being overburdened. We can only be truly free in Christ; only in Him can we be free from that slavery to our lower nature, or from slavery to the world, both of which are the chief causes of toil beneath a crushing load. Christ's invitation to come to Him, to take His yoke upon us, to

learn from Him, is sounding in our ears to-day. Never was it more essential that we should respond to it. For by responding we shall not only lighten our own burdens, we shall not only benefit ourselves, but by our changed conduct towards others we may lighten many a burden which to-day we are, perhaps thoughtlessly or unconsciously, imposing upon others who, in a period of possibly unexampled stress and strain, are feeling the need of that "soul-rest" which Christ promises to His trusting, and therefore obedient disciples.

III

CHRIST AND THOUGHT

"If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?"—ST. JOHN iii. 12.

CHRISTIANITY, the religion of the Incarnation, is meant to penetrate every sphere of human activity, it is meant to influence, indeed to rule, every faculty of human nature. It should influence thought as well as action. It cannot rule conduct as it should unless it first rules the sources and motives of conduct. We are often told of the "inwardness" of Christ's teaching, of the stress which He laid upon the motives; by which is surely meant the importance which He attached to the cultivation of those faculties by which, humanly speaking, conduct is promoted and regulated.

One common cause of failure to live a truly Christian life arises from forgetfulness of the importance which Christ attached to *thought* in regard to the things of religion. Multitudes

of men and women are quite ready to think seriously about certain things in life. If they are anxious to achieve some worldly or material object, to make money, to gain some social position, even to master some branch of science or literature or art, they will apply their reasoning powers strenuously to any of these. They know that before they can safely choose the best means and methods to achieve their object, much clear thinking will be necessary, as it also will be all the time they pursue their purpose. But when the majority of people approach religion they seem to forget the need of strenuous and clear thought; they appear to assume that in regard to "the things of the Spirit" thought can be dispensed with.

The New Testament on every page contradicts this assumption. If ever there were writings which demanded exceptionally clear thinking they are those of which the New Testament consists. There are thousands of books whose meaning, and the application of whose teaching, lie upon the surface. We read them once, or at most twice, and we have gathered all they contain. With the books of the New Testament, as with the teaching of Christ, the very opposite is the case. We may study them carefully a hundred times without having exhausted their meaning;

indeed it is only after repeated and careful study that their meaning begins to unfold itself to us. If ever there was a teacher who demanded the closest attention and the clearest thinking from his disciples or hearers, that teacher was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider His method of teaching by parables, a method which we can see has many advantages; for instance, it enables both the educated and uneducated (of which two classes most general audiences consist) to take something useful away. Again, while the parable as a story catches the attention, it is capable of a great variety of applications. But would any one venture to assert that the parabolic method of teaching is one which does not require very close attention, that it is one whose meaning is carried upon its surface?

Then, besides the parabolic, our Lord uses the proverbial or aphoristic method. The interpretation of this, again, demands very careful thought. For the proverb, being a principle or rule deduced from a wide experience of life, combined with a deep insight into life, depends for its utility upon its application being strictly confined to just those cases to which it is really applicable. And surely such a choice demands very careful thought. The case is analogous

to that of a mathematician who, wishing to solve a problem, must first carefully consider the particular one, out of the many rules with which he is familiar, that he must apply in order to obtain the correct solution.

In Christ's well-known interview with Nicodemus, from which the words of the text are taken, we find Him dealing with a man who, from his position and profession, should certainly have been a trained thinker. Our Lord appeals to him as *the* teacher of Israel. By this is probably implied that he was not merely *a* teacher, nor yet the only teacher, but that in relation to some special sphere of influence he was recognised as *the* teacher. And our Lord, after mentioning certain phenomena, certain processes of which observation was possible, and "which had their sphere and place on earth," asked Nicodemus, "Perceivest thou not these things?" If Nicodemus had exercised his thinking and reasoning powers as he should have done, especially when his responsible position is remembered, he could not have failed to understand the meaning of what Christ had just placed before him. Christ, you will recollect, draws a distinction between two kinds of material for thought; the first He terms "earthly things," the second "heavenly things." Perhaps the trans-

lation may mislead. The word "earthly" is not in any sense depreciative; it does not imply unimportance. The difference here between earthly and heavenly is simply that between phenomena whose sphere of operation is on earth and truths the knowledge of which is due to revelation. What our Lord implies is, that if upon facts and phenomena of everyday experience Nicodemus has exercised his mind so unsuccessfully, he cannot have trained himself to understand, and so will not be able to understand, those truths of a higher order which our Lord would like to have felt justified in placing before him, that is, as infinitely valuable material for thought.

Let us very briefly study the whole interview. The opening words of Nicodemus seem to give the clue to his mental condition and mental activity. They consist of wide generalities couched in plausible phrases such as the careful thinker instinctively shuns. "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God": we admit that from the signs Thou doest. There is here no evidence that Nicodemus and those he associated with had discerned any uniqueness in Christ's personality or character. There is no proof of any apprehension of those qualities in our Lord's teaching which to a truly thoughtful

observer would at once have become evident. Then, again, Nicodemus implies, that to him our Lord's "signs" were the only proof of the Divine origin of His mission. Nicodemus was an observer of actions, but not a thinker penetrating into the character of the doer of these.

Our Lord's first assertion is one eminently fitted to test the use Nicodemus made of his reasoning powers. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Here Jesus states a universal rule. Does Nicodemus admit its truth—from his own experience and from his observation of the lives of others? Nicodemus meets this assertion by a double question. First, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Secondly, "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" These are not the questions of a careful thinker. The first reveals an inability to see an analogy; the second takes altogether too narrow a view of human nature. It ignores the existence of spiritual forces both within and outside a man.

Our Lord recognises the forgetfulness of these, and in a second and equally definite assertion He reminds Nicodemus of it. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Where, Nicodemus,

Jesus seems to ask, have your powers of observation and judgment recently been? What about that baptism of John, of which you cannot be ignorant? What about the spiritual change, whether permanent or not, of which the willingness of multitudes to plunge into the Jordan was one effect? Have you tried to think out this? Whence came the moral change produced by John's preaching and of which his baptism was the seal? A change implies a force. Whence had come, and what was the nature of, the force producing the change evident in many who had accepted baptism from John? If Nicodemus had thought clearly, he must have known that all things produce according to their nature. Spirit produces spirit and flesh produces flesh. Nicodemus should also have recognised that there are great and mighty so-called "natural" forces in the world which, while affecting the material, are in themselves invisible and mysterious in origin. Could he not discern in his own nature and in the natures of others forces analogous to these and equally mysterious?

Nicodemus' further question is, again, not that of the clear thinker, who is generally humble minded. He does not confess his want of perception and say, Now that I come to think of what you speak I see how

blind and thoughtless I have been. Instead, he simply asks half-sceptically, "How can these things be?"

Our Lord's next question, or rather exclamation —"Art thou the teacher of Israel and understandest not these things?"—is one of rebuke. And, I fear, the rebuke it contains is as much deserved by many of us as it was by Nicodemus. We do not *think* enough about religious truths and religious experiences, about spiritual powers and possibilities, about some of the most real, if invisible and immaterial, things in life. We forget "the mind's love of God," which is only another term for the devotion of the mind to God and His service; we forget that this service should be a *reasonable* one. If only we could remember that the Incarnation sanctifies the whole of life, that it tells us not only to devote all our powers to God, but each of these powers brought to the highest point of possible perfection! This implies the training, the care, the improvement of each as something for which we must give account.

Few people sufficiently recognise the duty of careful thought upon all subjects. We have only to recollect that commonest of all excuses, "I did not think," or that equally common utterance of remorse, "If only I had thought!" But it is more especially upon the duty of careful thought

in connection with our profession of Christianity that I would dwell now. What is the connection between our religion and our thought (or our reason)? Surely it should be a very close one. Let me take a single instance of the necessity for this connection that should exist between faith and reason. Too often these are regarded as, in some indefinable way, opposed the one to the other. On the contrary, a true and worthy faith will be based upon both reason and knowledge (the material upon which thought or reason acts). It was because Nicodemus had evidently neither observed carefully nor reasoned clearly that our Lord saw the difficulty of leading him to understand and so to have faith in "heavenly things." Faith has been likened to the action called the dead lift, by which an athlete makes his spring and trusts his weight to a horizontal bar. But before the athlete does this he must feel justified in doing it; he must, from observation and knowledge, feel sure that the bar will bear the strain.

We must remember two things: First, that by His Incarnation the Lord Jesus Christ has sanctified and calls upon us to sanctify and devote to God's glory every human faculty; secondly, that thought and reason and judgment (which should be their issue), being our highest

faculties, are those for whose right use we should feel the deepest responsibility.

Christ is, for His service, making the same large demand upon our thinking powers that He made upon those of His first disciples. Shall we, who profess to offer ourselves to Him, not offer the highest part of ourselves, and that highest part brought by careful cultivation and equally careful use, to the most perfect efficiency of which it is capable?

IV

CHRIST AND SPEECH

"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."—ST. MATT. xii. 37.

ONE way in which Christianity differs from all other religions lies in the much greater importance which it attaches to speech—that is to both the spoken and the written word. In Christianity I am here, of course, including the religion of the Old Testament, out of which it sprang, which was the divinely ordained preparation for it, and without a knowledge of which it cannot be understood. Leaving on one side the ritual connected with the Tabernacle and the Temple, which probably never formed a very important factor in the more really and deeply religious life of the Old Testament, we may say, that in the importance they attach to speech, in the immense use made of it, as the chief vehicle for imparting and diffusing religious knowledge, and in the responsibility attached to the wise

employment of it, the Old and the New Testaments are in entire agreement. Indeed we may assert that, from the days of Amos to the present time, speech, as the means whereby ideas are conveyed, as the expression of thought and feeling, and as the chief instrument whereby an appeal is made from one mind to another, has been the principal agency for the diffusion of the true religion. The enlightened and thoughtful heathen, when they came to investigate Christianity, seem to have been specially astonished at the almost complete absence from it of spectacular means of appeal, that is, of ritual and ceremonial, of all that would appeal to the senses rather than to the mind and the heart.

Take the greatest religious leaders of the Old Testament, its chief spiritual and ethical forces, the Prophets, Lawgivers, Psalmists, and Wisdom Writers—what instrument other than speech do they, except on the rarest possible occasions, ever employ? This, apart from the example of everyday conduct, is practically all they use to gain an influence over other men. It is almost their single weapon for attacking sin in all its forms; it is also their one piece of defensive armour for meeting the attacks of others.

Consider, now, our Lord and His apostles. With what equipment, beyond the power of

intense conviction and an absolutely dedicated life—with what other equipment except speech, do they go forth to convert the world? "Go preach," that is, announce or proclaim; "go teach," "go make disciples" (a charge implying, of course, the creation of willing and receptive hearers); "go speak all the words of this life"—such are the commands of the Master. "Preach the word . . . reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching," is the final command of His greatest Missionary apostle.

Two thoughts suggest themselves in proof of the infinite wisdom of God in selecting this instrument and method. First, a religion destined to be universal must have a universal means of appeal. It could not depend upon what could not be at the disposal of, upon what could not affect, could not be understood, and could not be employed by, every one. Secondly, a religion which is destined to grow and expand must have for its chief means of propagation one which also has within itself the possibilities of unlimited development, also one which, in the breadth of its use and in its importance, is similarly sure to expand. It must possess an instrument which is available everywhere and under all circumstances; one which, as life and its needs develop (by the process of either integration or differentiation)

will, by the same processes develop, and also be able to meet all demands which can be made upon it. Speech certainly fulfils the first condition; it is year by year as surely fulfilling the second.

Speech is the means or instrument most generally employed for communicating or diffusing ideas; and ideas are the strongest of all forces which govern conduct. If we could subtract from our stock of ideas those we have received or assimilated either from reading the words or hearing the speech of others, the residuum would be small indeed. I would not for a moment be guilty of confusing culture with mere amount of erudition, but to read the words of inspired men and to listen to the speech of those who are enthusiastic over some high and noble cause, are surely two of the chief means whereby our nature is enriched and also strengthened towards effort on behalf of righteousness.

Then, how infinitely greater have become our means of diffusing ideas through speech! Through the printing press and through the telegraph, in all its various forms, speech has become a much more powerful instrument whereby to sway opinion, and therefore also to influence conduct, than was once the case. We have only to compare the means available for

multiplying copies of a Gospel in the first century and at the present time, or the number of those who could learn the contents of a sermon of St. Paul with the millions who to-day, within a few hours, can learn what some great political leader has said—we have only to make such comparisons as these in order to see the enormously increased possibilities of influence for both the written and spoken word. But while modern inventions have so increased the power of speech, they have immensely increased the responsibility for its right use. It would not be too much to say that now the welfare of tens of thousands may depend upon the words of a single individual. Peace and war, national security and commercial prosperity, may depend upon an utterance of a single speaker. When we think of all this, may we not speak of our Lord's *prescience* when He laid such importance upon the right use of speech? May we not believe that when He chose to employ it as the chief instrument of His purpose He foresaw the immense possibilities inherent in it?

Let us now briefly remind ourselves of some of the sayings of Jesus upon this subject. The first of all His parables, that of the Sower, has for its subject the word of God, the message from God given to men either through Christ

Himself, or through men inspired by the Holy Spirit. The importance of this "word" lies in the fact that, like the seed of corn, it contains a principle of life within itself which may go to work in the hearts of men and be extremely fruitful in results. In this connection we may remember Christ's own quotation from the Book of Deuteronomy: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Putting this saying side by side with the parable, we see how Christ regarded God's word as at once an inspiring and a guiding and a sustaining power in life.

Here are two other sayings which may well be considered side by side: we read that, when Christ taught in the synagogue at Capernaum, those who heard Him "were astonished at His teaching; for His word was with authority." After Christ had finished the Sermon on the Mount, we read that "the multitudes were astonished at His teaching: for He taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes." In both cases, evidently, the contents and manner of Christ's speech brought conviction to the consciences of those who heard. What He said struck men as coming from the Source of all authority; it was also clearly in perfect consonance with absolute truth. Only One Who realised the

possibilities of speech could have chosen His words so as to produce this conviction. To these testimonies I would add two others, one being that of the officers sent by the chief priests and Pharisees to arrest Jesus—"Never man so spake as this man"—that is, as Jesus did; the other is Jesus' own testimony to the permanence of the results of His teaching, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." The first of these is a testimony to what the power of speech may be, the other to the lasting impression of even the spoken word.

One reason for the effect produced by our Lord's speech was its perfect consistency with His conduct. Between Himself and all that He uttered there was that absolute unity which is too often wanting in our speech. This consistency He demands in us, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in Heaven." The final words of the Sermon on the Mount, which describe the responsibility of the hearer, a responsibility of which we are reminded in the parable of the Sower, teach us that if speech does not effect its purpose, the fault may be as much that of the one who hears as of the one who speaks.

Next, I would remind you of this great saying

of our Lord about the responsibility of our own speech: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the Day of Judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Two assertions are here made with perfect clearness: first, the immense responsibility of speech; secondly, that according to our words others form and pass judgment upon us. The idle word is the word that fails to effect its purpose, because it has been so ill-chosen that it cannot do so. It is not merely the word uttered without thought; it is rather the wrong word uttered, or the word wrongly uttered. It is the entirely ineffective word which actually takes the place, and so prevents the utterance, of the word that would have been effective. It not only does no good, it prevents good being done. Hence one great responsibility with regard to speech is that clearly asserted by our Lord. The following words point to a different yet a not less important responsibility. When Christ says, "By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," He reminds us that all social intercourse, if it is to be edifying, demands real self-revelation. Conversation in which we attempt to give a wrong impression of ourselves or of our opinions wants

the first condition of profitable intercourse. It lacks truth, and truth is the basis of trust, which, in its turn, is the only basis upon which we can live with one another as we should. And we may give a wrong impression of ourselves through carelessness as well as by a deliberate intention to deceive. Conversation is the mutual self-revelation of ideas. It is a means whereby others are enabled to decide how to act towards us; it should be a means whereby we can act wisely towards others. But careless words may be untruthful words which create a wrong impression; they may actually hinder us from rendering mutual service to each other. By them we may be justified without cause or condemned with cause. Thus the first and second parts of this saying of our Lord's are closely connected together. The second part as much as the first condemns the idle word, the word spoken without a due sense of the responsibility of speech.

I have surely given sufficient proof of the importance which Christ has attached to speech. I have also shown His prescience as to how much more powerful, and therefore how much more important, speech would become in process of time. But have not the temptations as well as the responsibilities connected with speech also become greater? For good or for evil there is

probably more and wider social intercourse to-day than ever. We probably live less in solitude and more in company with each other. It may be that owing to increased knowledge, however superficial its nature, we have more to talk about. With some people the stream of talk seems never to cease running. We sometimes bear an afternoon's or an evening's entertainment described as consisting, at least in part, of "floods of talk." Where this is so, the temptation to use idle words, insincere words, misleading words, must be very great; and the Spirit of counsel is hardly likely to be present.

Let us remember the power for good or evil, and therefore the immense responsibility for this great endowment of speech. Let us remember the high value placed upon it, the warnings uttered against its misuse, and the great and noble purpose to which it was dedicated, by the Lord Jesus Christ.

V

CHRIST AND COUNSEL

"Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?"—ST. LUKE vi. 39.

MANY of Christ's short sayings are moral and spiritual laws of universal application. They might be termed the natural or inevitable laws of the moral and spiritual world. They assert that the constitution of man, that is, of human nature, and the constitution of the world being what they are by God's ordinance, certain actions must produce, or issue in, certain results. Such a law is contained in the questions of the text, for of the answer to these questions there can be no doubt. Paraphrased, the law may be stated thus: If one without knowledge or discernment or judgment seeks the aid or follows the advice of one no better equipped than himself, both must inevitably come to grief.

The lesson of the saying is, of course, the immense responsibility involved in both seeking

and giving counsel, advice, or guidance. Yet how very careless many people are about both! They ask advice of this person or that without first considering or inquiring whether these are really qualified to give useful advice on the particular subject or matter upon which they are seeking it. On the other hand, an equally large number of people are quite ready to give, even to offer, advice in regard to matters upon which they have little or no real knowledge or experience.

In the eleventh chapter of Isaiah we have a picture of the Messianic or Ideal Ruler. Upon this Ruler the Spirit of the Lord, we are told, shall rest. This Spirit is defined as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. These are the qualities of which His character shall be composed, and we know they were the qualities of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the ideal of the prophet was fulfilled. But in the Ideal State to which the prophet looked forward the people shall reflect the virtues of their Ruler, just as we look forward to the time when Christ's followers shall reflect the virtues and graces of His character. Hence we may assert that these virtues of which the prophet speaks are those which the true follower of Christ should seek for and cultivate.

Among these is the Spirit of counsel. Let me ask you to notice its position. It comes third, that is, after wisdom and understanding, and immediately before might or strength. Reflection will show us that the order of these virtues is the right one. Wisdom here, as so often in the Bible, means the possession of skill in regard to the conduct of life; it means general efficiency in the art of living and acting as we ought. Understanding is what enables us to apply this skill or efficiency to definite or particular cases or circumstances. Now counsel, I believe, bears a similar relation to understanding, to that which understanding bears to wisdom. As understanding presupposes wisdom, so counsel, if it is worthy of the name, presupposes understanding, and therefore also wisdom. If we should go one step further, it would be evident that strength or force, of the best and highest nature and when most efficaciously applied, presupposes all the three virtues which precede it.

Thus in the Ideal State, when life and conduct are what they should be, there will be not only the Spirit of counsel, but true counsel will presuppose efficiency wisely directed. How different is the case with many and very important spheres of both thought and action to-day! It is not so in all spheres, it is not so in those where people

are compelled to recognise that long training and technical skill are necessary. Few people would venture to offer advice to the captain of some great ocean-going liner, to the manager of some great works, to the engineer of some great undertaking, with regard to their special work. But now consider four other spheres of activity in which, considering the possible consequences of thoughtless, inadequate, or wrong counsel, the responsibility of either asking or giving counsel ought to be regarded as a very serious one; yet in these spheres multitudes of people, without any real qualification to do so, are ready both to seek and to offer advice.

Take, first, the largest and most important of all spheres, that of conduct. How ready many of us are to go to this person or that with the question, What ought I to do in this case? How equally ready we are, often in the most delicate circumstances, to say to those we know, If I were you I would do this! How few people before they ask advice take the trouble to learn and estimate carefully the qualifications of the person to whom they go for the advice they need! On the other hand, before we venture to give advice how rarely do we take every means possible to discover and weigh every single factor in the problem we are offering to try to solve! Welfare

or the want of it does not depend upon, is not due to, a number of isolated and independent actions, performed by a number of people without any connection with each other. If there is one lesson more than another which the New Testament, and especially the teaching of Christ, enforces on every page, it is that, for good or evil, we are members one of another, and that each action we do, indeed each word we speak, "goes to work in the world," with consequences upon others which we seldom take the trouble, even if we have the means, to estimate. Nearly all Christ's parables, which contain so much of His teaching upon conduct, are pictures of animate nature, the great note of which is continuity, inevitable development, whether right or wrong. Another lesson we may learn from the advice which Christ gives is the immense stress He lays upon *great principles*. Yet how seldom in either asking or giving advice do we stay to consider what great principle is involved, whether the person from whom we ask advice is likely to be ruled, whether indeed we ourselves are ruled, by the need of obedience to these! If only we could realise that law and force (which, of course, are two very different things) act just as surely and inevitably in the moral as they do in the physical sphere, we should be infinitely more careful in our

obedience to law, infinitely more careful in the application of this or that force.

Secondly, take that ever-widening sphere of activity known to-day as "Social Work." What an immense amount of even gratuitous advice is at present given in this sphere, nay more, what a vast range of often entirely unasked-for interference is attempted in the lives and homes and families for whom some people assume they are quite capable of legislating! The last thing of which I would be guilty is of even appearing to check the ardour of any one engaged from a high motive in any branch of philanthropic work. But I could not estimate, if I tried, the enormous amount of evil I have seen done through well-meaning but incompetent people attempting this work with an almost entire want of wisdom and understanding (in the highest sense of these words); I could hardly exaggerate the mischief I have witnessed from such people failing to seek adequate and thoroughly efficient counsel. If Christ, even when invited to interfere, said, "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" surely we may hesitate before we rashly and uninvited assume those offices! How ready many so-called philanthropic workers are, without any special training and with little or no exact knowledge of their circumstances, difficulties, and

temptations, to offer advice to the poor, even to offer ill-considered opinions upon proposed legislation which in their ignorance they assume must have beneficial results! They forget that the life of an individual, and the life of a family or a community each requires more delicate and skilful handling than does a complicated piece of machinery. Have you never thought how often Christ, as He surveyed the evils of life, must have felt tempted to interfere? Yet how seldom, if ever, is such interference recorded!

A third sphere in which advice is often far too carelessly given and asked is in that of religion. This is especially true in regard to the externals of religion, which unfortunately, with so many, seem to take the place of religion itself. How ready we are here both to pronounce this or that to be right or wrong, and also to ask the opinion of people who have no qualification to justify them in expressing an opinion! The ignorance, only equalled by the positiveness, with which some people pronounce judgment upon what they term the *true* teaching of Holy Scripture or of the Church, is one of the most prolific sources of religious controversy, and of the unhappy divisions among professing Christians. How comparatively few take the trouble to study these difficult questions long and carefully for themselves, and

how rarely they seek the guidance of those who have given to them the thought of a lifetime! They are generally much more ready to speak with that certainty which to the expert is often the surest proof of a want of really deep knowledge.

Lastly, there is one sphere in which perhaps more than in any other, considering the possible consequences, the careless asking and giving of counsel can only be regarded as disastrous. I refer to the sphere of party politics. Upon how little real knowledge we are here quite ready to pronounce a positive judgment! How apt we are, without any real thought, to accept the views of others! With how little real justification for doing so we throw in our lot with this party or with that! How ready we are to say, without any intimate knowledge of the subject or the circumstances, that this law or that does or does not need alteration! How little we think of the possible consequences of ill-considered so-called reform, or of the want of reform that is really needed! What a valuable lesson here, again, Christ teaches us! You remember how He was asked, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" What men sought from Him, what men seek from us, and what we too often seek from others, is not some great principle requiring care-

ful application, but rather an immediate answer which may be quoted as a party catchword or party cry.

There are, indeed, few warnings, even among those uttered by Christ Himself, which we need to lay more seriously to heart at the present time than that contained in the question, "If the blind lead the blind shall they not both fall into the ditch?"

There are few lessons, even among those taught by Christ, which we need to learn more carefully than that of the immense responsibility of both giving and accepting counsel. For good or for evil, we are all bound up together in "the bundle of life."

Let me remind you of the words of a great statesman with whom a friend was sympathising on account of the immense amount of work which high office had bound upon his shoulders. "It is not the amount of the work which one feels," said the statesman; "it is the tremendous responsibility involved in the decisions one has to make, that is the real burden of office. These decisions are the great difficulties of life."

Would it not be well for us all if this great truth were much more widely recognised?

VI

CHRIST AND THE TRUTH

"Truth came by Jesus Christ."—St. John i. 17.

WE are accustomed to take far too narrow a view of the meaning and consequently of the obligations of truth. We are far too apt to confine its application to statements, and to think of it chiefly in connection with the intellect. Christ took a much wider view of truth. To Him it was chiefly connected with life, with character, conduct, and action. Let me suggest to you a way by which you may discover its significance to Him. In saying after saying of His try the method of substituting the word "ideal" for the words "true" and "truth." The ideal is, of course, only another term for the highest and best conceivable. An ideal society or man or action is what God means each of these to be. Each is ideal or true when it is absolutely perfect. Possibly the best working definition of the truth (as the term is commonly

used in the New Testament) would be, "the truth is what ought to be." Put these two sentences together: first, "I am the Truth;" secondly, "Behold the man," and we have the conclusion, Christ is all that man ought to be. Or take these three sayings from the sixth chapter of St. John. "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. . . . I am the bread of life;" then remember that we speak of bread as the "staff of life," by which we mean that which supplies support or sustenance to life, and we shall see what Christ here asserts is, that the "true bread" is "that which fulfils absolutely the highest conception of sustaining food," in other words, that Christ Himself is therefore the ideal support of man's highest life.

On another occasion Christ spoke of Himself as "the true vine," or, more exactly, He said, "I am the vine, the true vine." By this Christ meant that in His Person "He brings to complete fulfilment those vital relations of the parts to the whole . . . which are shadowed forth in the vine." But by this simile Christ means much more than this: He evidently refers to the vine as the symbol of the ancient Church, and thus speaks of Himself as the "ideal" vine. "Israel

failed to satisfy the spiritual truths symbolised in the natural vine; the natural vine only imperfectly realises the truth which it expresses. In both respects Christ is "the ideal vine," as contrasted with these defective embodiments."

Or, take the saying in the prologue to St. John's Gospel, "Truth came through Jesus Christ." By this we understand that Christ not only revealed what should be, He not only enabled men to see this, indeed He did not only bring the ideal life into the world, but He brought the power of realising this ideal.

And with the revelation of the Truth came the revelation of the opposite to the Truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and since Christ was "glorified," the Holy Spirit has been the Agent whereby Christ's work has been done, and whereby Christ's purpose has been promoted in the world. One work of the Holy Spirit is to produce conviction, that is, conviction in regard to the truth, and therefore also in regard to its opposite. Now righteousness may be defined as truth realised in conduct. And the Holy Spirit convinces the world of righteousness and consequently also of sin, its complete antithesis.

We may put this thought in another form. We shall all agree that the truth enlightens, and

also that by means of the truth we learn and see what is not true. It is by contrast with the perfect standard that imperfections are detected. Thus Jesus revealed man's imperfections as none other ever did. By contrasting ourselves or others with Him, we may see what ought and what ought not to be.

The truth of our Lord's striking assertion, "Whensoever I am in the world I am the light of the world," is seen on every page of the Gospels; for one constant effect of Christ's presence is to reveal the infinite contrast between all others and Himself. This is most strikingly seen in the events which immediately preceded the crucifixion. In contrast to Christ, the Truth Incarnate, and by the light of His presence and His conduct, we cannot fail to see the falseness of all those among whom He moved. Take, first, the questions put to Him by the leaders of the various parties of the Jews. Were these such questions as men who recognised the responsibilities of leadership should or would have asked? Next, consider the answers given by our Lord, and how in these He revealed the motives which had prompted the questions. Can we wonder at the remark of the Evangelist that after these replies, "From that day durst no man ask Him any more questions"? Consider

also the conduct of His various judges—Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate,—and to these we may add Herod. What strikes us most is the utter untruthfulness of each to the position he occupied. Each so-called trial was a complete travesty, a hollow mockery, of justice. Each judge was infinitely removed from what the ideal judge should be. Lastly, consider the conduct of the disciples, how far it was from true discipleship, from what the ideal of discipleship should be. I am not thinking only of the treachery of Judas, or of the denials of St. Peter. I am thinking of the action of the whole twelve in regard to the feet-washing, of their apparent inability to enter into the thoughts of Jesus or to sympathise with His purpose, of the conduct of the three during the agony in Gethsemane, and of the flight of the eleven after the arrest. Every single incident is a revelation of the want of truth in action, governed, of course, by the want of truth in the innermost heart.

In contrast to all these let us watch the conduct—the actions and words of Jesus—in its absolute and unswerving truthfulness. What a revelation of truthfulness there is in these words, "When the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He *steadfastly set His face* to go to Jerusalem"! From that

time onward, as we watch Him, we see His "truth-full-ness" becoming more and more clearly revealed. Nothing turns Him by as much as a hair's-breadth from His purpose. Notice how on the way up to Jerusalem and in the supper-room He teaches the difference between true and false ideals of greatness. He enters Jerusalem in His true character of a monarch Who would enter peaceably into His rightful inheritance. He cleanses the temple, pointing to its true purpose and use, as against the purposes for which it was actually then employed. In the parables of the last few days of instruction He is the true teacher. In the supper-room His discourses are one long self-revelation of His true nature. In the great consecration prayer and in the Garden He reveals the nature of true communion and true dependence upon God. I surely need not say more in support of the contrast I have pointed out.

Let us now leave the New Testament and consider everyday life as lived by what may be termed average people at the present time. Let us examine our own lives, our profession of faith, our worship, whether public or private, our daily intercourse with others in business or in society. How much there is in all which, while it no doubt "passes muster,"

when tried by the conventional standards of the world, is seen to be infinitely far removed from the ideal, is revealed to be far from the truth, when measured by the standard of Jesus! And remember that while we have His life, as recorded in the Gospels, as an abiding standard, we have also a means of testing truth or falsehood, that is, of conformity or want of conformity to His standard, bequeathed to us by Himself. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit proceeding from Him, is "the Spirit of the Truth," is the One Whose office is to interpret the Truth and to enforce it. The Spirit will constantly bring us to Christ, as our standard; He will also constantly bring Christ to us. He will, amid the frequently shifting and changing standards of everyday life, show us the one unchanging essential and eternal Standard.

Three times in the great discourses uttered in the supper-room on the night before His crucifixion does Christ describe the Holy Spirit as "The Spirit of the Truth." On the first occasion that He uses the term He promises that this Spirit shall be beside us to help us, ready, that is, to be summoned to our aid. He also promises that He shall be within us, to inspire and to guide us. On the second occasion Christ promises that this Spirit shall testify or

bear witness—the expression is a comprehensive one—of Him. On the third occasion Christ promises that the same Spirit "will guide us into all the Truth," into that complete understanding of, and sympathy with, the absolute Truth, which is Christ Himself.

And what is the chief object of the Christian? Is it not to bring himself and others into conformity with Christ, into complete likeness to Him—the one perfect and absolute standard or ideal? In one respect truth is like life. It is at once means and object, for through the Truth we attain to the Truth. Because Christ is the Truth He is the Way, and because He is the Way, therefore He is also the Truth. It is only through being absolutely true that we can attain to the Truth. If this is the case with the truth considered as an intellectual quality, it is equally the case when the truth is regarded as a moral virtue. And, as I have already noticed, the idea of moral truth, that is, of conformity to a moral standard, is even more prominent in the New Testament than is that of intellectual truth. St. Paul speaks of "living" or "doing" the truth (either in an atmosphere of love or by means of love as an instrument), as the method whereby we grow up into both closer communion and closer conformity with Christ. St. Paul also speaks of

the truth being in Jesus. To him the historic Jesus, who is revealed in the Gospels, is the incarnation of the truth, which is a "reality"—St. Paul was a great "realist"—and no mere convention, as possibly Pilate regarded it. For why, if he did not so regard it, did Pilate ask that half-mocking question, "What is truth?"

The earnest seeker after truth, or the truth, the one who would become that which he was meant to be, and who would try to bring both men and institutions into conformity with the absolute ideal for each—for such an ideal surely exists—must, inspired by the Spirit of the Truth, turn to Jesus, for only through Him Who is the Truth can we attain to the Truth.

The present age is often spoken of as an age of criticism, and the term criticism in this connection is sometimes used in a depreciatory sense. But criticism may be extremely useful; that is, if it helps us to discover the true by separating from it the false. To-day every kind of human life—religious, professional, commercial, industrial—and every kind of institution, is subject to very searching, and sometimes unkindly, criticism. The unkindly criticism is rarely useful, for it is hardly ever correct; the spirit in which it is pursued inevitably warps the judgment. But criticism in itself we must not resent, and

if we are true we need not fear it. It may do, and much criticism at the present time is actually doing, a real service. It is acting as a useful winnowing-fan, separating the chaff from the grain. Christians and Christian institutions in the past have, often unwisely and to their own loss, resented criticism. But the best of all kinds of criticism, the one most calculated to disarm the criticism of the world, is to bring ourselves into the presence of the Truth, into the presence of Christ Himself, and there, by the help of the Spirit of the Truth, to examine ourselves, our conduct, our speech, our aims and purposes, by the perfect standard, the one which in the record of the life and teaching of Jesus has been preserved for us.

VII

CHRIST AND EXAMPLE

"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."—ST. MATT. iii. 15.

EVERY recorded incident of our Lord's life, if only we will study it carefully and reverently, will be found to contain a lesson for our own conduct. And often the more difficult it seems to be to understand a particular incident, and the greater the thought required before we can grasp its meaning, the deeper will be the impression which the study of it makes upon us.

The Baptism of Christ by John in the river Jordan is such an incident. At first sight Christ's action seems to us, as it seemed to the Baptist, to be not only unnecessary but unnatural. Let us think what John's baptism meant. It was a sign of the acceptance by those baptized of the truth of the rebukes contained in John's preaching, also of an intention on their part to obey his exhortations.

Now, if ever a message was contained in a single word that of John was so. The single pregnant word "repent" includes it all. Repentance implies previous ignorance—whether wilful or not; but as it refers to conduct as well as to thought, it also implies that the previous conduct had been ruled by ignorance rather than by full or adequate knowledge. Such, of course, had been the conduct of those to whom John preached. A spiritual blindness was, in fact, ruling the conduct of the Jewish nation as a whole at that time. The people generally were not in spiritual communion with God. They disregarded the terms of the covenant which God had made with their forefathers. Repentance implied the realisation and practical recognition that this covenant was broken; it also implied a willingness to seek for its renewal. Of the reality of this willingness the acceptance of baptism by John was the outward sign. It was a proof offered to him and to all who witnessed it that a need was felt of a changed relationship to God. It was a public confession of the need and also of the desire for a new, a better, a more worthy life.

John recognised all this; hence not only his astonishment at the coming of Jesus to receive this baptism at his hands, but his earnest effort

to prevent Jesus from doing so. Baptism implied to John the recognition of both a failure and a need—the need of an inspiration to a new, a higher, a better life. But in Jesus John knew there had been no failure to live a life of complete communion with God; with Jesus there was no need of repentance; His life had always been inspired by the very loftiest aims and principles. Though John was a veritable champion of righteousness, he recognised in Jesus One Whose righteousness was infinitely superior to his own. Can we wonder at John's protest, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me"? But Jesus is insistent. Quietly yet firmly He bids John comply with His request—"Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us—both you and Me—to fulfil all righteousness."

This is the first utterance of Jesus recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, and it is in entire agreement with His first utterance recorded by St. Luke—"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" The spirit and the tone and the purpose revealed in the two sayings are identical—the furtherance of the Divine purpose by the doing to the utmost of the Divine will. This is the one comprehensive motive which rules and regulates the whole life and every action. In the case before us the Father's

purpose was, through the ministry of John, to bring back the people into covenant with Himself. All that would help to further this purpose Jesus would do. The measure of self-humiliation involved He never considered for a moment. The conduct of Jesus here is in entire agreement with the whole course of His voluntary self-abasement. It is just one instance of His constant recognition of the law of the fruitfulness of sacrifice. Through self-sacrifice alone can the Divine will be done.

Let us dwell for a moment on His words. "Suffer it to be so *now*." There is much implied in that "now." Those who are wise recognise the importance of "circumstances." They know that every action, however personal it may be in its motive, is, directly or indirectly, *social* in its consequences, and that it must be considered in reference to its effects upon others, and also in the light of its possible interpretation by them. Our Lord does not dispute the correctness of John's saying, "I have need to be baptized of Thee." He recognises things as they are; but while on the one hand He does not deny His own moral superiority to John, on the other hand He remembers the effect which His own submission to baptism may have upon the crowd collected on the bank of the river. He knows

the enormous power of personal example; He also knows that many an action can only be judged, and therefore inevitably will be judged, in the light of necessarily imperfect knowledge.

Our Lord now gives the reason for His demand that John should baptize Him: "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Only by your doing your duty and by my doing mine, Jesus seems to say, and by our doing it in such a way that it may be a visible testimony to the people—only so can we not only obey God's will ourselves, but also help others to obey it. How much is implied in that word "thus"! Frequently neither God's ways nor Christ's ways are the ways that we should choose. Yet, as doubtless John recognised when he obeyed, it is in scrupulous obedience to Christ's requests that the testimony is most efficaciously given. So long as a purpose is kept in view, we are apt to think that the details of its accomplishment do not matter. But it is frequently the details of conduct which impress others. It is often by these that we are judged.

In His last words Christ gives the reason for His request; and He does so by reminding John of their common purpose. The appeal would go home to the Baptist's heart; and here, as always, Christ appeals to the loftiest principles and the

highest standards. What was the conscious and determinate purpose of His own life and that of John but the fulfilment of righteousness? And Christ is the perfectly Righteous One. Because He is righteous, the furtherance and promotion of righteousness means doing His will in His appointed way. Oh, how much we may find in a single word of Christ's! Let us remember this word "thus," and let us learn to do Christ's will in Christ's way. Let us not try to do it in any self-chosen way.

Then think of that word "fulfil." Fulfilment is a favourite Biblical idea. It must be so, for the Bible connects life with Christ in God, and it is Christ who "filleth all in all," and it was "of His fulness" that the first disciples felt they had "received." In the ideal life, as manifested in Christ, there is no place for half-and-half living or half-and-half doing; there is no place for that condition of lukewarmness which, especially in connection with both religion and duty, is so common among ourselves. To those in close communion with the Divine, "life is real, life is earnest"; for them life is the strenuous fulfilment of righteousness. To them, as it was with Christ, the first thought in life is about their "Father's business," and their aim is that the work given them to do may be finished or completed; and

the meaning of completed is identical with that of "fulfilled." "To fulfil *all righteousness*." The term "all righteousness" here does not mean so much the sum of righteousness in its unity as in the totality of its various fragments. Nothing which belongs to, or which promotes, righteousness must be forgotten or disregarded; because each righteous deed, as each righteous thought, "goes to work in the world." And this action of Christ's in uniting Himself with those who, by being baptized, were confessing that they and their nation stood in need of a death to an old life and a rising to a new life—this action of Christ's was a righteous deed, one tending by the power of example to produce righteousness. And the record of it, if only carefully studied, may do its work among us in the world to-day, by stimulating us to humble submission to God's methods, by impressing upon us the need of careful obedience to these, not only for our own sake, but as a witness and an encouragement to others.

How seldom we think of the social effect of actions which we are apt to regard as purely personal! How seldom we estimate their power, directly or indirectly, upon the conduct of others! How seldom do we remember the immense range of the force of example, and of the effects of the law of imitation!

Let us notice a very few of the ways in which this force of example seems to be both active and dangerous to-day. Here is some form of sport or of amusement which possibly we may be able to enjoy without any danger to our own moral health, but which is a source of temptation to others; it may be in tempting them to spend time or money they cannot afford. Our indulging in it may tempt them to do so: on the other hand, our refraining from it may lead them to refrain, and save them from an extravagance possibly issuing in painful consequences to those dependent upon them. How rarely do those who set or who follow the fashion in expensive amusements think of the temptations they place in the way of those morally weaker and financially poorer than themselves!

Here is another example. Sunday comes round, and with it perhaps comes the temptation to absent ourselves from a place of worship. We can all too easily find excuses—not reasons, which are an altogether different thing—for doing this. The service is badly rendered; the preaching is mediocre and unedifying; a quiet hour by the fireside or a gentle stroll in the fresh air will do us more good. We have so little time for quiet or fresh air in the week. But what of the effect of our example upon our children, upon

our neighbours, even upon those who find our place in God's House a vacant one? The listening to a dull sermon, from which we might perhaps get more good than we believe possible, the taking part in a service whose rendering leaves much to be desired, but in which we can join others in prayer, will tend more to the fulfilment of righteousness, by the influence of our example on others, than will the absenting of ourselves from the Lord's House on the Lord's Day.

Yet another example. We are asked to take part in some movement for the public good. We are very strongly tempted to decline. We can truthfully say we have already enough to do; we know that some of those with whom we must associate ourselves will be exceedingly difficult to work with. Considerable drafts will be drawn, not only on our time, but on our temper. But what of the force of our example upon others? The work is a good one, helpers and funds are urgently needed, and if we throw ourselves into the work and subscribe as liberally as we can, then others may be induced also to do both. We may thus be helping to fulfil righteousness.

One further and still more general application. I refer to a personal expenditure upon luxuries which possibly we can ourselves easily afford, but

which if we use, and especially if we use them ostentatiously, we may tempt others to regard as something to be sought after at all costs for similar use. It is in this way that luxuries gradually come to be considered as necessaries, and a material standard of living is set up, which makes social intercourse more and more difficult to those who have only moderate means. To forgo the use of such things when we can well afford them, and to spend wisely on charity what we might spend on personal luxury, may be an act of real self-sacrifice; but at the same time the example may be widely fruitful for good. Negatively, it may prevent life being made harder for many; positively, it may mean much needed help being available for the poor, the sick, and the suffering. In both ways it may help to promote objects dear to the heart of Christ.

Before I close let me ask you to remember what followed Christ's baptism—the descent of the Spirit upon Him and the approving word of the Father. It was upon Jesus as a man that the Spirit descended; it was of Him as a man that the words, "This is My Son, My beloved," were spoken. It may be difficult for us to understand how upon Him Who was full of the Spirit a further gift of the Spirit should come, and why to Him Who always did to the utmost His

Father's will there should be an occasion of special approbation. But this we may see, that by His public baptism Christ increased His power for good among those He sought to influence. This also we may understand, how on this occasion a special mark of God's pleasure in Christ's conduct was made, not for His sake, but for the sake of that innumerable multitude who should read of, and be inspired by, this great act of self-humiliation.

VIII

CHRIST AND SOLITUDE

"And in the morning, a great while before day, He rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed."—ST. MARK i. 35.

THERE are two kinds of solitude: the first we may call voluntary, being such as we seek for ourselves, for our own benefit; the second we may term enforced, which we have to endure against our will. From time to time Christ sought for a short season the first kind; the second, so far as human companionship was concerned, was His lot throughout the whole period of His earthly ministry. How often must He have felt what St. Paul expressed when he said, "I have no man like minded with me"? But in Christ's case, as it may often be with us, the want of companionship of spirit with men was more than compensated by a wonderfully close and constant communion with God. "I am not alone, for the Father is with Me." It is only of

voluntary solitude and of the duty and advantage of seeking it that I would speak now.

To-day, it would seem, comparatively few people seek even short periods of solitude. Far from seeking such experiences, they seem to dread them as an evil to be shunned. How many could echo the old Latin saying and declare that they were never less alone than when alone? Evidences of this actual dread of solitude as we look around are many. One is the very common preference for town over country life; another is the rapid growth of the fashion of living in residential hotels; yet another is the rage for social amusements and excitements of various kinds. Solitude induces thought, and the last thing for which a great many people wish an opportunity is thought, and especially meditation. Yes, seeking for solitude is certainly out of the fashion, and to be out of the fashion is with most people an evil above almost all others to be dreaded. To do what others do and to go with the crowd saves us from the necessity of thinking. To ask others what they are going to do and then do the same demands far less mental effort than to find an answer to the question, What ought I to do?

But by what does a nature or character become strong? How does it rise above the average?

By what means is progress made? Let us search the records of history and those of our personal experience, and what is their answer to these questions? But before we seek that answer it will be well to remind ourselves of two truths of apparently universal application. First, there is a law which seems to hold good in every sphere—in the moral, spiritual, and social spheres as well as in the physical—that all movement tends to take place along the line of least resistance. One application of this law is the temptation to do everything in the easiest possible way, whether that is the best way or not. The second truth is, that in human nature there seems to be always at work a tendency to degeneration. There is always active a pulling-down force which might be likened to the earthward action of gravity; and so any rise or improvement in life can only be made by setting in motion, or connecting ourselves with, a force which shall more than counteract this tendency to degeneration.

Here, again, I would appeal to experience. Let any one neglect opportunities for raising and deepening the spiritual life and for exercising self-discipline, for instance, for prayer, study, thought, and meditation, which may be the chief employments of solitude—let any one continue

to neglect these, and then let some demand upon our higher nature, upon the conscience, the judgment, and the will be made, shall we not feel conscious of a weakening, if not of a painful want, of that moral-spiritual power through which either a victory over temptation may be won, or a ready answer to some call for self-sacrifice, a call, it may be, from Christ to render to Him some necessary service may be promptly and willingly rendered? From time to time we notice in some friend or acquaintance a slackening of Christian energy, a cooling of Christian zeal, a falling away of effort to reach or maintain some high ideal. Would a careful self-examination reveal similar tendencies in ourselves? If we made a careful inquiry into the cause of these, would not this cause be found in some neglect, in some way or other, in the careful culture of the spiritual life?

Let us now turn to the life of Jesus, and in doing so let us remember a truth which we are unconsciously in danger of forgetting, namely, the reality of His human nature and therefore of His spiritual needs. "He was tempted in all things as we are," and among the temptations which He suffered must have been that to self-reliance, as opposed to reliance upon God, and consequently to neglect those opportunities of

spiritual refreshment which total or comparative solitude offers. But how careful our Lord was not only to embrace, but even to make these! We may well believe that the period of the Temptation was such an opportunity; for by His baptism and the descent of the Spirit Christ had just been publicly designated to His ministry. On another occasion we read that, "In the morning, a great while before day, Jesus rose up and went out and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." Then, on the evening after the feeding of the five thousand, we are told that Jesus, after He had taken leave of His disciples, "departed into the mountain to pray." As examples of our Lord seeking comparative, rather than total solitude, we may remember His ascent to the Mountain of Transfiguration with three only of His disciples; also His taking these same three farther than the rest into the Garden of Gethsemane on the occasion of His agony.

If Christ felt the need and the refreshment of these times of solitude and prayer, can it be doubted that the same are very necessary for us? Many of us, as He did, live not only a busy life, but one in which many demands are made upon our moral and spiritual nature. These demands upon us may be both direct and indirect. They may be definite appeals for our help in the battle

with sin and worldliness, calls to us to join in some great and necessary crusade against various powers of evil. To respond to these calls and to take part in the conflict may mean loss of material comforts and benefits to ourselves; but how are we to respond to this call and to persevere in the struggle without that power of self-sacrifice which can only come from communion with Him Who sacrificed Himself for the sin of the world? The calls upon our moral strength may also be indirect, and among these I would place the responsibility of constantly setting a good example, and of always living up to a high ideal. How, without constantly obtaining fresh supplies of spiritual strength, can we satisfy these demands? How, unless our own moral courage is kept strong, can we help others to overcome in the day when the stress of temptation is great?

In the rush and hurry, in the bustle and turmoil of everyday life (whether that life be mainly one of work, or, as is too often the case, one chiefly of pleasure or of pleasure-seeking), certain very important factors of life and character are apt to be neglected and overlooked. It is to supply these factors that times of solitude are so essential.

(1) We frequently complain that we have so little time to think. This means that we make

little or no opportunity either for self-examination or for reflection upon the meaning, the purpose, or the progress of life. Life tends to become shallow and mechanical. We go on talking and doing without asking ourselves whether we have a clear ultimate purpose in life to which all our various activities can be legitimately attached and which they tend to promote. We do not stay to consider whether our course is right or wrong, whether it is such as will best enable us to attain what should be life's object. We need, like the captain of a ship at sea, to take regular observations, and by means of some fixed and trustworthy standard, as the sailor by the fixed stars, to determine our exact position, the direction in which we are going, and our rate of progress.

(2) We do not always realise how great is the moral and spiritual "wear and tear" in life. Many of us are constantly giving out much more than we are taking in, and then quantity is very apt to take the place of quality. What we give out becomes thinner and thinner. We recognise the want of rest and change from mental and physical labour: we know that mind and body require recreation, but how rarely we try to obtain moral and spiritual refreshing! We long for and strive to obtain the fresh air of the sea or the mountains; but what effort do we make, what

opportunity do we seek, in order to enjoy the soul-refreshing breezes of God's Holy Spirit blowing upon us from the heights of heaven?

(3) Then we forget that town life, and life constantly lived among crowds of people, tends to remove us from, to cause us to forget, the great fundamental realities. In a country village we feel so much more immediately dependent upon things beyond our control, for instance, upon the forces of nature. In the town there seems to be so much we can alter and manipulate by human skill. There we are more apt to think that man does much and God does little. In a country village much more is thought of a birth or a death outside our own home; in a town many of these are taking place every day. The townsman especially needs to go apart into a quiet place, to meditate upon his dependence on God, to learn to say to Him: "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." Only thus can we learn the much-needed lesson of humility and its corollary, obedience to God's will.

And how may we most profitably employ such periods of temporary solitude as it was the custom of our Lord to seek, and as I am advising you to seek? First, I think, as opportunities for self-examination. Do we sufficiently "take heed" to ourselves?

Do we sufficiently often take stock of our moral and spiritual, even of our mental condition? I fear that in respect to the first two some of us are in a worse condition than we are aware. We do not realise how much we need re-equipment. We do not know how we stand to God in the discharge of our stewardship to Him. Secondly, periods of solitude should be sought as opportunities for prayer, for coming as close to God as we possibly can, for really spiritual and personal communion with Him. I would not for a moment disparage the value of public and united prayer; but private prayer is as essential as common prayer. To-day the rush of life has entered into the religious as into every other sphere, and consequently there is a danger of even our devotional life becoming shallow, thoughtless, mechanical. Thirdly, we need far more opportunity than we usually make for thoughtful study. Probably many of us read enough; but what do we read, and to what profit? How many of us would like to confess how very short a time we devote to the study of the Bible? The excuse of "no time" will hardly serve when we think of the time we actually spend in other pursuits.

Remember the example of our Lord. If He needed these precious hours for spiritual refreshment, they must surely be absolutely necessary

for us. It cannot be that we have no time for them. Actually to each of us the day is of the same length. What we need is not more time, but a wiser apportionment of the time we have. We need to learn how to make the first things, the really important things, of life the first of all the charges upon it.

IX

CHRIST AND OPPORTUNITY

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest."—ST. JOHN iv. 35.

NO one can fail to notice how many of the illustrations which our Lord uses to explain and enforce His teaching are taken from the world of nature, especially from that part of it which has life, and in which continuous change in the way of either growth or decay is always in process.

Two objects in particular our Lord constantly employs in order to draw lessons upon conduct: these are the cornfield and the vineyard. From the cornfield come the parables of the Sower, the Tares, the Seed Growing Secretly, and the picture from which the text is taken, namely, that of the crops ripening in the sunshine. From the vineyard we have the parable of the Labourers hired at different hours, that of

the Two Sons, that of the Wicked Husbandmen, and also the simile of the Vine and the Branches.

Our Lord's choice of these illustrations was not governed only by the fact that He was teaching a people whose staple trade was agriculture, and that therefore, if He wished to gain their attention, He must speak to them about something with which they were familiar and in which they were interested. He had, I think, a reason beyond this, namely, because He saw how very close are the analogies between processes at work in the physical world and changes which are continuously taking place in the human heart and character.

To Christ there is no stronger conviction than, that the universe is a "law-full" universe, that law pervades every sphere of it, and that therefore every process and the action of every force within it are governed by laws which are both inexorable and of universal validity.

One of these laws is that of never-ceasing change. So far as we can discover in the sphere of life, which we term the organic world, nothing ever remains, even for a short time, the same. From the lowest forms of vegetable or animal life up to the highest forms of intellectual or spiritual life change is constantly proceeding. This change may, of course, be either for the

better or the worse: a particular object of observation may be seen growing either stronger or weaker: the process at work may be one of integration or differentiation, or both processes may be taking place simultaneously: any definite organism which we are studying may be growing or diminishing, it may be improving or deteriorating; but where there is life, there change of some kind is in process.

Because Christ so fully realises the truth of this law, He teaches not only the responsibility of each human life to other human lives—I mean with regard to influencing the nature of the change—but He also teaches that if this responsibility is to be adequately discharged it does not admit of delay. Together with the conviction that there are duties which should be done goes this further conviction, that every day has its present and urgent duties which cannot, without serious loss, be deferred. More often than we think it will be found impossible to do to-morrow what ought to have been done to-day.

Let us read the text in the light of this truth. Two interpretations have been given of the question, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest?" The first is that they simply mark the season of the year when our Lord spoke them, say, about

the end of January; for the cornfields of the plain of Shechem would be ready for the sickle in May. The second interpretation regards the words as a common proverbial saying, one which expresses the idea that the opportune time for some action is as yet in the future, or that without any harm some work may be deferred. According to this interpretation the words would mean, The preliminary labours of ploughing, sowing, etc., have been done, the crop is now growing, and therefore, so far at any rate as it is concerned, the husbandman need not trouble until it is ripe for reaping. Bishop Westcott thinks that this is the correct interpretation, and certainly there seems to be much in its favour. As a warning against its being regarded as universally applicable, and especially against its application to the work to which Christ was calling His disciples, the proverb was peculiarly apt. Two different harvest-fields were, of course, in the mind of Christ. There were the cornfields on the plain of Shechem, but there was also the great harvest-field of the human race, suggested by the Samaritans approaching through the first cornfields, that is the men who, at the bidding of the woman with whom Jesus had talked, were coming to see and to hear Him. These men were to Christ grains of a vast potential harvest, a harvest of human

souls which might be reaped and gathered into His garner. But this human harvest was one demanding *immediate* effort; it was one in which work was at that very moment urgently needed; with regard to its reaping, the right time was the present. The men whom Christ and the disciples saw were ears of a vast harvest, not only always becoming ripe, but, alas! always becoming *over-ripe*, that is, passing into a condition when the labours of the reaper would be in vain. Christ saw that the opportunity of reaping them was present then, as the sequel proved; but He also saw how quickly that opportunity would be gone. A striking proof of His estimate of the urgency of the work is seen in His refusal even to partake of the food of which He stood in need until He had spoken with these men, until He had at least so far influenced them as to make them desirous of hearing His message at greater length.

The chief lesson suggested here by Christ is plain. It is the importance and so the responsibility of seizing the present opportunity, of always at once doing all in our power to further His great purpose, that is, to promote righteousness among men. "The fields are white already unto harvest." There is no lesson we more urgently need to learn than the one conveyed by these

words. It is the same as that taught by St. Paul, "Now is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation." Do think of the great law of change and of the special application of it by Christ in the passage before us. The great human harvest is constantly coming to ripeness for Christ, but at the same time it is also passing beyond the right condition for reaping. It is because of this that we must struggle against that very common tendency in human nature to put off work, to defer the time for labour. Here is an important work which needs now to be done for Christ. We see the need ourselves, or it is pointed out to us; and with this knowledge there comes to us an invitation to do it. How is that invitation or call usually answered? Not, I think, by an outright and definite refusal. The temptation against which we have to struggle usually comes in a more subtle form than that. We are rather tempted to say, I will think over it; I will try to do it a little later on; I will do it when a more convenient opportunity comes. We forget the law of change. Within a short time three changes will very likely have taken place; two of them certainly will have done so. First, those whom we might have influenced will certainly have changed; secondly, circumstances will probably have changed; thirdly, we ourselves

will (again certainly) have changed. Those whom we might have influenced may then not be so susceptible to influence as now; they may have become like a crop which has passed the proper time for being reaped. Then, owing to circumstances, they may have passed beyond the sphere of our influence; they have gone one way, we have gone another. Lastly, we have changed, perhaps unconsciously to ourselves, but none the less really. For we must remember that by a well-known law of human nature, every call to duty neglected or disobeyed makes it harder for us to do that duty the next time the call or opportunity comes. There is many a call to duty which, if it is ever to be answered, must be answered at once: it would not be too much to say that if it is not answered then the possibility, indeed the probability, is that it never will be answered. And this, not because it may not be repeated, nor because the need may have passed, nor even because circumstances may have changed; but because by our disobedience, by the effects of that upon our own character, we shall have deprived ourselves of the *power* to obey it. There was a true wisdom in the *promptness* of the reply of the prophet to the Divine summons, "Who will go for us?" "Here am I, send me," said the prophet; and the issue

was a life of exceptional usefulness, a ministry with incalculable issues for good.

But do not, I beg of you, think of the lesson I am putting before you as one applicable only to what are sometimes termed great, or important, or exceptional opportunities for service. Do not think of it in reference only to a call to dedicate a life to the ministry, or to do some special work for Christ, like teaching in the Sunday school, or visiting among the poor, or accepting some post of responsibility in connection with some branch or sphere of Christian work. It does apply to all these, but it has a much wider application. For instance, here is some friend or acquaintance who, you know in your heart, is just now in need of some definite influence towards good; here is another who, you fear, is likely to fall into some particular temptation; here is a third who, you feel, possibly needs only a word of encouragement in order to become himself an active worker for Christ. In each case you fail to speak the word that is needed, your excuse to yourself being that you do not like to interfere. For what a multitude of neglected or unused opportunities this last excuse does duty! In each case, however, you fail to do what you know you ought to do, and the opportunity for doing it passes. The first acquaintance passes beyond the reach of

your influence; the second passes beyond the stage at which brotherly counsel might have saved him. Upon the one who was ready to work for Christ the conviction has grown that he is not wanted; no one has, so to speak, been the medium of the call of the Spirit to him, and so he has given up the idea; his energies are now turned into another channel, and possibly at your door lies the cause of, it may be, a very useful soldier being lost to the army of Christ. If in the future we look back upon these lost opportunities, what must be our verdict upon our conduct? The opportunities lost or neglected by professing Christians, could the issues of these be revealed, would explain a very considerable proportion of the difficulties with which the Church of Christ is struggling to-day.

Thus, the question, "Say not ye, There are four months, and then cometh the harvest?" suggests a warning frequently needed. But while it is a warning against one kind of conduct, it is a strong exhortation towards the opposite kind. And in one field of Christian enterprise the exhortation, as an exhortation to greater effort and more real self-sacrifice, has a special urgency to-day. Many earnest Christians are, I know, fully alive to this urgency, but the great majority of professing Christians seem to be unable to realise

it. I refer to the present opportunity, and at the same time to the present danger, in the Foreign Missionary field. Never apparently was the opportunity so great, never so far as we can see —remember the law of change—were the signs so clear that this opportunity may pass away before we can use it. Yet what proportion of those who profess to follow Christ seem to be prepared by a real self-sacrifice to help to seize this opportunity? How many seem ready to help to win the world for Christ?

Oh, do think of the responsibility of opportunity! Think how quickly opportunity passes away! Think of those we might, yet do not, help! Lastly, think of the wrong which, by refusal, we do to ourselves! And remember that if we refuse Christ's call to service now, we are, by this refusal, actually incapacitating ourselves; we are taking away from ourselves the possibility of, at some future time, rendering another and it may be a still greater service to Him.

X

CHRIST AND TEMPTATION

"The devil taketh Him unto an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."—ST. MATT. iv. 8, 9.

A WIDE experience of life, combined with a careful observation of conduct, though the two are not by any means always combined, teach us that temptation generally attacks people in one of two ways. They are either tempted to aim at an object or to pursue a course of conduct which is wrong in itself; or they are tempted to strive after an entirely right object by means and methods which are neither the highest nor the most pure. This latter form of temptation is by far the most subtle and, at any rate among professing Christians, it is much the most common. So subtle is it that even professedly Christian teachers, if they have not stated explicitly that the end justifies the means,

have yet tried to find plausible excuses for acting as if it did so in a considerable number of cases. Put quite briefly, the first form of temptation is to seek a wrong object; the second is to seek a right object by wrong means.

I believe that all the three temptations of Christ by the devil in the wilderness were temptations of this latter kind. They were temptations to employ wrong methods in order to accomplish more easily an exceedingly lofty and righteous purpose. But before we study the temptations themselves, I would ask you to notice two points very carefully—First, we have no right to assume that this was the only occasion on which our Lord was so tempted. In the Gospels we have, as St. John tells us, only a small selection of our Lord's sayings, doings, and experiences related. Therefore, instead of regarding the Temptation in the Wilderness as a unique experience, I would rather say that it has been recorded as an example of the kind of temptation by which our Lord was assailed throughout the whole course of His ministry. The second point I would notice is the exact moment in our Lord's history at which this temptation occurred. He had just been publicly baptized by John. He was just about to enter upon His public ministry.

Such a moment in any human life—and we are here dealing with our Lord in the fulness of His humanity—such a crisis in the development of any human career, could not fail to be a time of intense thought, of deep self-questioning, and also one of more than ordinary effort to estimate what the future might have in store. May we not then with complete reverence assert, that probably at this time He realised more clearly than He had as yet done the immensity of the task to which He had dedicated His life? May we not also say that, owing to this increased clearness, He became more fully conscious of the infinite difficulty of His mission? An intense longing to see His purpose successfully accomplished was piercing His very soul. But *how* was it to be accomplished? *How* were the difficulties which lay in His path to be overcome? What means and methods should He employ in order to overcome them? It is only when we keep these thoughts in mind that we realise the extreme subtlety of the temptations placed before Christ. The devil never attacks Jesus directly. Never for a moment does he question His high purpose. He never attempts to dissuade Him from this; he rather suggests, though indirectly, one means after another by which this purpose may be more expeditiously

accomplished. But Christ realised that in reference to *His* purpose it was impossible, even in thought, to separate means and end. The means were actually a part of the end. Christ knew, that only by perfectly righteous means and methods could a perfectly righteous object be accomplished.

This will become still more clear if we remember that Christ's ultimate purpose was the creation in men of a certain character, namely, that character which can be most comprehensively described by the single word "righteous." Any attempt to produce a righteous character by any other than righteous means and methods must defeat itself; for it is by the means and methods employed that the character is all the time being formed. If these should be less than the highest, their employment is constantly lowering the character which they are being used to raise. The means employed, instead of promoting, are actually defeating the end in view. The devil knew this. He knew that if he could only induce Christ to change His methods there would be no need to attack His purpose. For with any but the highest means the accomplishment of that purpose is impossible.

Let us now briefly review the three temptations in the order in which they are given by

St. Matthew. For Christ to have succumbed to the first temptation—to turn stones into bread —would have been to admit that a wealth of material things was helpful, if not essential, to the achievement of His object. It would have been to admit that life does consist in the abundance of things possessed, that the Kingdom of Heaven does not belong equally to the poor as to the rich, that eternal life depends rather upon what a man has than upon what he is. Think of the type of character formed by the acceptance of such a creed! Christ's whole life would have been contradicted. Why did He choose to be born in comparative poverty, and for years to earn His living by the work of His hands, but in order to show the complete falseness of such views? Yet to-day we are often tempted to give way to the devil's suggestions, and to act as if we believed that the real success of some institution or movement whose object is the formation of character does actually depend upon the amount of money raised for its support. We have only to think of the time and energy spent by philanthropic and religious people in collecting subscriptions, instead of their devoting more of both to directly spiritual work, in order to see this. We have only to watch many a father devoting far too great a proportion of his

energies to making money in order that his wife and children may, as he would probably express it, have all that they can need, and at the same time to notice how this father is neglecting his home and the training of the characters of his children. We have only to notice this in order to see that while his object may be praiseworthy, the means he is employing to attain it are more likely to defeat than to promote it. I would go even a step further and say, that we have only to notice how often methods, which are hardly consonant with the highest standard of morality, are employed to raise money, not only for philanthropic, but even for distinctly religious objects. In all these cases the purpose and the object may be entirely right, but the methods being used to attain that object are not such as Christ would have sanctioned.

I can deal more briefly with the other two temptations, for in both the same method—that of inciting our Lord to attain a right object by wrong means—is employed as in the first temptation.

When in the second temptation the devil placed Christ on the pinnacle of the Temple and incited Him to cast Himself down from thence by miraculous means before the eyes of all into the crowded courts below, he was again tempting

Christ to employ a means of appealing to the people which, even if successful, would have defeated the object He had in view. Christ certainly desired to obtain an influence over the people, but it was an influence over their character, over their reason, their conscience, their moral nature. What improvement, what right development of character can issue from mere wonder or astonishment, or from a compulsion to belief? What moral effects can issue from a merely emotional excitement? The men in the Temple courts might have been compelled to admit that Christ was endowed with Divine power, but what could they have learnt of His righteousness, or of the righteousness of God through Him? Those who have read the history of the Jews during the centuries immediately preceding the coming of Christ, know that one chief reason for a want of righteousness among them was due to the want of high moral teaching. The Jewish teachers during this period had led the people to be constantly expecting some miraculous intervention of God on their behalf; they had taught them to look for some deliverance which God would effect for them, apart from any moral reformation, any repentance from sin, any effort after righteousness, any change of heart issuing in change of conduct. They had

forgotten the condition so clearly proclaimed by prophet after prophet in the Old Testament, that a moral reformation must precede a return of God's favour, and therefore also a condition of national welfare.

To-day we have to fight against a similar temptation, one which may be described as a tendency to lay stress upon a superstitious conception of Christianity rather than upon its demand for a righteous life. If we examine with care the so-called religion of many people, we shall find that it is full of such a superstitious conception, and therefore that it has little effect upon their everyday conduct. Many parents, I fear, bring their children to baptism with some vague idea that the mere ceremony of itself must in some way "do the children good," but without any intention of carrying out what baptism implies and should involve, namely, the careful bringing up of their children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Again, many people apparently think that a prayer said by the death-bed of one who has led an evil life must act as a kind of charm to procure for them entrance into heaven. Also, I fear, that many come to the Holy Communion with a vague idea that the mere reception of the sacred symbols, apart from the moral factors of repentance, faith, and

love, issuing in obedience, must be beneficial to them. For Christ to have succumbed to the devil's suggestion would have entirely destroyed His moral and reasonable appeal to the highest faculties in the nature of the people. It would have been to deny that upon their answer to such an appeal their moral reformation depended, as did therefore their salvation in the true sense of the word.

The third temptation—that in which the devil promises Christ all the kingdoms of the world and their glory on the condition that He will worship him—is the most comprehensive of the three. Here, also, the temptation refers to means and methods. To obtain "the Kingdoms of the World," to vanquish and to take possession of them was exactly Christ's object. For this He had come into the world, and this was the purpose of the ministry upon which He was just about to enter. That He would ultimately obtain these kingdoms, Christ must, with His perfect trust on God, have felt certain. He must have been convinced of the ultimate triumph of righteousness. But Christ knew at what cost to Himself and to countless of His followers this end would be attained. The devil offers it as a gift. On the contrary, Christ must have foreseen how long and how bitter the struggle must in-

evitably be. The devil here, as so frequently, offers quick and easy returns. But had Christ given way to this last and crowning temptation, He must for ever have given up all hopes of His ultimate object.

Remember, "the Kingdoms of the World" meant something very different to Christ from what they meant to the devil. He puts before Christ their material embodiment as seen from the high mountain — countries and cities and fleets and armies. To Christ "the Kingdoms of the World" are the antithesis to the Kingdom of God; they represent the rule of men by forces other than those according to the will of God. And for Christ the Kingdom of God, that is the rule of God, is the acceptance of God's will. But to worship the devil would have been to accept his rule as a means; it would have been for Christ to accept as a means that which as an object He had come to defeat.

"Truly," says an old writer, "the devil is a very stupid person." But, alas! men and women are often even more stupid. They do not see through his fallacies, and so they are taken by his wiles.

The lessons we may draw for ourselves from this great conflict (which was also a great victory) of Christ's are many. Let us take at least this

one to heart, and it is a very comprehensive one —The end of Christ is the formation of a certain character, it is the conversion and sanctification of human nature. It is not a material success. But, as I have already noticed, while character is the end, it is also the means.

Possibly the temptation to measure the progress or success of Christ's cause by material and external standards was never greater than to-day. Probably the temptation to regard large material resources as essential for its furtherance was never more strong than now, and consequently never was the temptation greater than to obtain these by methods which fall below those demanded by the strictest interpretation of the word "righteous." But Christ's object is not material wealth; it is moral and spiritual victory. It is, in one word, the righteous character. Let us then realise that this object cannot be achieved by means which actually destroy it in the very process of its formation.

XI

CHRIST AND JUSTICE

"All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets."—ST. MATT. vii. 12.

THIS is one of many sayings of Christ whose true meaning lies far beneath the surface, and whose real teaching is something very different from what a careless reader or hearer might hastily assume it to be. Actually, I think, we shall find that the words contain an exhortation to a course of conduct demanding far more thought than we are apt to imagine.

First, let us remind ourselves of the contents of the whole paragraph in the Sermon on the Mount, of which the text is the last verse. The word "therefore," which points to a conclusion arrived at from something previously enunciated, bids us at least to do this.

The paragraph opens with the words, "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find;

knock and it shall be opened unto you." Here we seem to have a gradation of importunity, possibly of effort, implied. Seeking suggests more effort than merely asking, and knocking implies that the seeker is determined to find the object of his search. To the one that knocketh it is there promised that the entrance demanded shall be granted. Next we have a picture of an earthly father giving his children, who ask him for food, not something which will not satisfy them, not something which will do them harm, but giving them what will feed and sustain them. After this, Jesus with His heart full, as always, of His great fundamental conviction of the Fatherhood of God, continues: If imperfect earthly fathers have at heart the welfare of their children, how much more has the perfect Heavenly Father at heart our welfare! Nay more, if the earthly father, with his imperfect knowledge, is able to give to his children what is good and useful, how much more can and will the Heavenly Father, with His perfect knowledge of what is really best for us, give us that which will supply our real need!

Immediately upon this comparison follows the text with its striking "therefore." "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets."

In what I have to say, I would ask you to keep in mind throughout this picture of both the earthly father and the Heavenly Father. I would also ask you to notice that the earthly father, whom Christ here draws for us, is a good father, one who gives to his children what, so far as his knowledge goes, he believes will be for their real benefit. What Christ seems to say is, that this father, in virtue of his fatherhood, that is in virtue of his fatherly feelings towards his children, will do his best for them. If the earthly father does as much as this, what will the Heavenly Father, the Father Who is perfectly wise, Whose love and knowledge and foresight are all infinite, do? If among men you want an example of one doing his best for another, watch the conduct of a good father towards his children. But the Heavenly Father does still better, because He is perfectly able to know what is really for their permanant benefit.

Here Christ appears to invite us to ask these questions: In practice, does a good earthly father give his children *all* that they, with their very imperfect knowledge of what is good for them, ask from him? And does God give us all that we ask from Him? Has not experience proved to us that if He had bestowed upon us all we have from time to time desired from Him, the

result would certainly not have tended to our highest welfare?

Let us now, in the light of these thoughts, turn to the text. We shall, I believe, correctly describe it as a very comprehensive definition of *justice*; indeed we might, considering its brevity, describe it as possibly the most complete of all definitions. As we know, many attempts have been made to give an entirely satisfactory definition of this great fundamental virtue; but, I think, that after a careful comparison of these definitions with the one here given by Christ, we shall confess that His still remains pre-eminent.

The desire for justice is so universal that we may call it an instinct of human nature. What is history, as we find it in every age, but one long series of efforts to obtain justice? These efforts have been among the strongest of all motive powers towards moral, social, political, and religious progress. To-day we are often told that we are living in the midst of a social movement of almost world-wide scope, and we are also told that the chief cause of this movement, the force of which is the principal factor in its momentum, is "a passionate desire for justice." This is probably true; but it is also true that apparently many of those who are taking a lead-

ing part in the movement, have by no means a clear idea of the exact nature of justice, and that they have a still less clear conception of the conditions which must be fulfilled in order to obtain it. History teaches us that far too often justice appears to mean the redressing of any injustice, which people themselves may suffer, by inflicting some injustice upon others. Thus the object is defeated by the means employed to attain it.

Let us now consider the definition of justice contained in the text, but once again let me ask you to read it in the light of the preceding context. The earthly father, though his knowledge and judgment (when compared with the Heavenly Father's knowledge) are imperfect, will know what is good for the child far better than the child can know what is good for himself. The child desires many things which he *thinks* will be for his benefit. But the father knows that only some of these will be useful, and that others will be harmful to the child. The father, in virtue of his fatherhood, will do the best he can for the child; but because the father's knowledge, foresight, and judgment are all imperfect, his wisdom or skill in dealing with the child will be inadequate to his love. So the child will actually be granted a mixture of things good and evil. Who has not had

experience of this? Who does not often see it taking place to-day?

Now we turn to the conduct of the Heavenly Father, Who is perfectly wise, Who has complete foresight over the way in which His children will use what is given to them. If we remember this we can see why God both gives much and withholds much.

From these two relationships let us turn to those between acquaintances or friends in everyday life. These are imperfect, and are imperfectly discharged from many causes. Of these, ignorance is one, sin is another. Here is a man passionately desiring that I should satisfy some need from which he is suffering. This need, he tells me, is ruining his life and prospects. He quotes the text to me, as he understands it. What I ought to do, he asserts, is to treat him as I would wish to be treated if I were in his position. The crux of the problem lies in that little word "I."

Let us consider a man lying on a sick-bed in intense pain, and that he is one who knows little or nothing of the scientific treatment of disease. He begs the doctor to give him some drug, some opiate to relieve his pain. The doctor with his far greater knowledge refuses the drug, and recommends a painful operation, which will, however, remove the cause of the suffering. The

patient may say, If I were in your place I would not refuse to give the drug; if you were in my place you would ask for it. But, if the doctor wishes to treat the man with perfect justice, there can be no doubt as to which treatment he will pursue. If the patient knew as much as the doctor, there is no doubt which treatment he would demand. Surely the reading of the text is not, Do to others whatever they demand; but, Act towards them for their highest and best welfare in the light of the fullest knowledge which it is possible to obtain. This, surely, is to be truly just.

Here is another example. I know a man, the father of a young family, who is in great poverty. He pleads with me to give him temporary help, and tells me that if I were in his position, and he in mine, he would so act towards me. But I feel satisfied that, if he will make the effort, he can rescue himself and his family from poverty. If I give him help, this help will only deter him from making effort; also the help will soon be spent, and then he will be in as bad, indeed in a worse, condition than he is to-day. He quotes the text, as he understands it; but is this the sense in which our Lord meant it to be applied?

I will take a third case. I have a pupil who

is struggling with a difficult problem, but which I feel sure he can solve if he will only give to it the requisite thought. He asks me to show him the solution, for he wishes to go out to play. I refuse; and he, at least inwardly, applies to me what he regards as the true lesson of the text. But by granting his request, first, I should encourage him to put play before work; and secondly, I should do at least something to weaken his powers of self-effort. In refusing to do what he asks, am I not really acting justly towards him?

The meaning of the text, what it really implies, is now clear, as is also the meaning of the word "therefore," which bids us connect it with our actual experiences at the hand of our Heavenly Father.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you." Yes, but what kind of men, or rather men with what kind of equipment? Would you be treated as the ordinary man, as possibly you yourself, would treat you? Or would you be treated by men with an equipment of the highest wisdom, one analogous to that of the exceptionally qualified surgeon, or of the far-seeing philanthropist, or of the well-trained teacher?

A kind heart and a desire to do good are a very insufficient equipment with which to take

our neighbour's affairs into our own hands. We require far more equipment than these, if we are to treat him with the justice which is his due. What we must remember is that the text requires a very strong qualification, one doubtless assumed by Christ, and one which must not be forgotten by us. Thus it should be read, "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, *if you were equipped with full knowledge to perceive and as perfect as possible skill to decide what was best for you*, even so do also unto them, for to enable you to do this is the purport and the object of the whole course of Divine revelation."

The practical lesson is plain. We must realise how much skill is required for others to do the best for us, and what knowledge this skill implies. We must also realise how much is required from us if we are to do the best for them. The text seems especially to deal with our duty towards those younger, or more ignorant, or less wise than ourselves, that is, with those who have a very insufficient knowledge of what is really best for them. Before we act towards them as they ask us, we must think of the feeling of a good father towards his children, especially of the infinite wisdom of the Heavenly Father. As far as we can learn it from "the law and the prophets,"

we must deal with others not after their will, not after our own will, but according to the teaching of the Divine will. It is only a careful study of the will of God, it is only an equally careful obedience to it, which will enable us to deal justly with our fellow-men.

This was the secret of the dealing of Jesus with men. Every service He performed for them was done in the full light of the revealed will of His Father. This explains why He so frequently employed, as His way of helping them, the method of enabling them to make effort for themselves. He placed them in a position to help themselves, and then demanded from them that they should make the effort necessary for this.

Before we ask others to help us, let us ask ourselves whether the blessing of God can rest upon the course we intend to pursue. When others ask us to help them, let us ask ourselves with equal care whether the same blessing can rest upon the way in which they will use our help. In all our intercourse with each other the light of God's will, as revealed in His law and His prophets, especially in the life and teaching of the greatest of all the Prophets, the Lord Jesus Christ, must be our guide.

XII

CHRIST AND OBEDIENCE

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven."—ST. MATT. v. 19.

A GREAT teacher once told a gathering of teachers that the choice of the particular subjects they set their pupils to study was not nearly so important as the way in which the pupils were taught and encouraged to study. If we are content to interpret this counsel not too literally or prosaically, there is a truth of wide application underlying it.

Every thoughtful person will, of course, admit that education is much more than amassing knowledge of one or more subjects; also that it is much more than acquiring mechanical skill in one or more directions, whether that skill be quick application of brain power, or whether it be some peculiar deftness of hand. Education is

rather the proper training of the mind, and the right development of the character; it is the enabling the pupil to become the best which lies within him to be.

Now suppose we take any subject, and, by the way in which we teach our pupils to study it, we develop in them habits of careful observation, of strict obedience to rules, of absolute accuracy, of the power of concentrated attention, of steady perseverance, and, above all, suppose we are able to convince them that all their faculties have been given to them by God to be carefully used and developed for His service, we have then surely done for them what education, in the true sense of the word, is meant to effect. For we have helped them to develop and use, with a sense of responsibility, powers of mind and character which they can, and which from habit they naturally will, apply to all subjects under all circumstances.

It has been pointed out that one of the truths upon which our Lord frequently lays special stress is that of the essential inner unity of human nature. If this truth is accepted, we see that every part of our nature must affect every other part, and also that conduct in one sphere of action, or directed to one particular end, must affect conduct in all spheres and directed to any purpose. Unfortunately this is a truth which we

are very apt to forget, though one experience common at the present time would, if we considered it, help us to remember it. I refer to the custom for the most capable and most highly efficient workers in every sphere of activity to become what are termed specialists. Sometimes the specialist is regarded as a narrow man, as the man of one idea, and who can do only one thing well; but this is far from being generally true, and if we were to think of the great specialists to-day in the higher branches of knowledge or of science we should find that, as a rule, they are the men who have worked most diligently and most accurately, who have by carefully training themselves brought their intellectual powers to a high state of efficiency, and that, therefore, they are now able to use these powers to great advantage in some particular direction. Frequently in obituary notices of such men we read (and the verdict is true) that he was one who would have achieved distinction in any walk of life.

We are, as a rule, quite ready to admit that conduct of a particular kind affects character in the sphere to which it specially belongs. We should admit that if a man was guilty of repeated acts of inaccuracy or unpunctuality or intemperance he would quickly acquire habits of these, which would ultimately affect his character in

those particular ways. But, while we admit this, we forget two other truths: first, that every action has an effect, however minute, upon the character as a whole; secondly (the converse truth), that character, which is the inner unity of a man, affects action in every sphere.

The proof of these truths lies in experience. And it is from experience that we are justified in giving some general and comprehensive definition of a person's character. It is from experience that we speak of people as energetic or as wanting in energy, as trustworthy or the reverse, as careful or careless, as having or lacking the sense of responsibility. As a rule, an energetic man or woman will exhibit energy in anything they take in hand, whether it be business or philanthropic work, or the care of a household, or recreation. The person who is wanting in energy or enthusiasm, often described as the "slacker," will rarely exhibit zeal in anything. So the person who is careless in one department of life will rarely be found painstaking in any. The man whose business is, as we say, in a mess, will rarely be found to have a well-ordered home. On the contrary, if the one is well-managed, so will usually the other be.

A more painful yet not less conclusive proof of this inner unity of the nature or character is

found in the fact that a man who gives way to one sin rarely gives way to only that sin. An example of this is found in the frequent combination of intemperance and impurity, and these are often combined with betting and gambling. Want of self-discipline, issuing in want of self-control in any one particular direction, so weakens the character that self-control is lost in other directions. Indulgence in any one evil habit appears to weaken the fibre of the character as a whole.

There is a striking analogy to this in the sphere of sickness or ill-health. A patient is suffering from some definite disease which weakens the whole constitution, which lowers the general health. Then, as we say, complications, that is other forms of disease, set in, and very commonly the sick person ultimately succumbs actually to a different disease from that by which he was originally attacked. Here we see a striking proof of the unity of the physical organism corresponding closely to the unity of character. It is in recognition of this unity, and in order to maintain the whole system in as generally healthy a condition as possible, that so much stress is to-day laid upon hygiene and preventive medicine. And health, we know from experience, is frequently very largely a matter of self-disciplined life, that is, of careful obedience to the laws of health. A

breach of any one of these laws may mean a weakening in some way of the whole system, and disease, as we know, attacks the weak points; thus it is through these weak points that an inroad is made, and the general health becomes impaired. In a closely analogous way moral and spiritual health are due to self-discipline. The temptations which meet us in everyday life are very various—they attack us at different points, or on different sides of our character; but the attack must be met at each point. Not one commandment must be broken. The strong man is the man who has learnt to watch every part of his defensive armour. The strong man is he who can repel attack not at one but at every place assaulted. And it is by watchfulness and self-discipline that the man has become strong. The man or woman who has not learnt self-control or exercised self-discipline in childhood or youth is rarely able to exercise these in mature life. They are not at their disposal as forces of character, as reserves of strength ready for use at any time. It is those who, through obedience long and carefully practised, have themselves perfectly in hand that can meet all possible contingencies of temptation; it is they who are not likely to be overcome by any.

Examples of the insistence of our Lord upon

the truth I have been illustrating are very frequent in the Gospels. They are found in His preference for broad and comprehensive principles, which are applicable in every sphere of life and under all possible circumstances. Christ could not lay down rules to meet every detail of conduct; had He attempted to do this, some at least must have been omitted. "Be ye perfect," He says; and those who are perfect are altogether good, they are without any blemishes; there is no disobedience to the highest calls of duty in any direction. When asked concerning the great commandments in the law Jesus chooses those of widest application, the complete love of God, and entire duty to one's neighbour. "Blessed are those," He said, "that hunger and thirst," not after this or that particular virtue, but "after righteousness," the sum total of all virtues. He does not say to His disciples, ye are to be a light and a guidance to men in respect to this or that, but in your whole character and behaviour "ye are" to be "the light of the world." He does not say to the paralytic, This or that particular sin be removed from thee, but, Thy sins, all the sinful tendencies of thy nature, be separated from thee. He would not adjudicate upon the details of a private quarrel in which He was asked to interfere; instead, His advice and warning was,

"Beware of covetousness," which is the root of a whole multitude of disputes and evils, of such evils as injustice, unkindness, dishonesty, betting and gambling, and many others. Immediately after speaking to His disciples upon His commandments, He speaks of all these as *one*, and this as contained in the great comprehensive principle of mutual love. In the text the same method of the inculcation of a broad principle, that of obedience to God's whole law, is found; but it is approached from another point of view. Instead of being stated thus, Do all that is right, it is expressed by, Do nothing that is wrong, leave undone nothing that is right. The text is a complete answer to the common attempt made to excuse or whitewash certain people and their sins by saying, So-and-so is a good man, though of course we all know he has one great failing; as if a man could be a "good" man, and yet give way to this one "failing," which is here only a euphonism for some great sin. People who speak thus forget that in all probability this one "failing" is more or less undermining the whole of the man's character. Of the truth of this great principle of Jesus, the essential unity of human nature—whether we consider it on the small scale, that is in the individual, or on the large scale, that is as the unity of society—we are constantly

finding new proofs. To-day we attempt, for the purpose of more minute investigation, to take small fragments of human nature and society; we try as far as possible to isolate these in order to analyse and dissect them; but what do we find? We find that in order to understand or explain the fragment we must to some extent understand the whole; for apart from the life of the whole that of the part is unintelligible. Let me give one example: we cannot draw a ring fence round what appears to be quite a simple and circumscribed social problem. We may try to solve the problem of poverty in a single family, but we shall soon find that the roots and causes of this poverty stretch out in so many directions that not improbably before we have traced these as far as we are able, our problem has become actually an international one.

The lessons of the text are many. The first is the need of watchfulness over every detail of conduct. There must be no admission anywhere to the enemy. A second is the need of strengthening (again by constant attention to single actions) of fundamental principles like those of self-control, self-sacrifice, and ready obedience to all the various calls of duty. A third is the need of not only checking, but destroying at once, any signs of a bad habit, or any kind of moral weakness. "If

thine hand offend thee, cut it off." Why? Because if you do not the whole life will be endangered.

At first sight the text, with its insistence upon obedience to the smallest details of character, may seem almost contradictory to Christ's usual method of teaching by broad principles. At first sight it may seem to contradict much of what I have been trying to insist upon. But it is in the paradox that here, as so often, the truth lies. If you want to be able to act wisely under all circumstances, never allow yourself to act unwisely, even in apparently insignificant matters. If you wish to be able to obey the Divine Law in every sphere, see that you do not break the smallest fragment anywhere. If you want to be generally strong, see you do not neglect a single weak place. If you want to train your mind to be able to take a far-reaching and comprehensive view of great questions, then train it to the most accurate observation of minute details. The mind, the character, the man is one. This is the reason given by Christ for the verdict contained in the text. Christ's own obedience was perfect. Think of the marvellous unity and consistency unto perfection of His own character and conduct!

XIII

CHRIST AND ECONOMY

"A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench."—ST. MATT. xii. 20.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest Economist that ever lived. He was so, because He was the greatest Economist in life, which is man's most precious possession; for it is man's ultimate means of doing God's will, of fulfilling the purpose for which he was created. But when we assert that Christ was the greatest Economist in life, we must be careful to give the widest possible interpretation to the word life, which indeed must be understood to include life of every kind and life in every sphere.

The opposite to economy is waste; and one very useful way to help us to understand Christ's life—including His work, His teaching, even His crowning act of self-sacrifice, His death upon the Cross—is to regard it as a great campaign against

every defect or positive evil by which waste of life is caused.

What very false views we are apt to hold upon what economy is and upon what is waste! What we sometimes regard as prodigality, as the most reckless and wasteful expenditure, may really be the truest and wisest economy; while what we sometimes look upon as economy, may actually be the most thoughtless and shortsighted waste. The old Wisdom Writer shows us he had grasped this truth when he wrote, "There is that scattereth and increaseth yet more; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want."

If any one were to say to me, What evidence would you adduce if you were asked to show that Christian influence was increasing, and that it was more and more permeating society? I think I should reply: Consider the greater earnestness with which the warfare against waste in life is being prosecuted, and consider the constantly enlarging scope of that warfare. By taking part in this warfare, whatever their motives, a larger and larger number of men and women are certainly engaging in a work in which Christ is the greatest of all leaders.

Evidence, not only of the scope and earnestness of this warfare, but of the large measure of success

which is attending it, may be seen on every side. Let us first consider what is being done to prevent waste in physical life: we can watch this from infancy to old age. We have only to consider what is being done to lower the rate of infantile mortality, what is being accomplished by the medical inspection of school children, by the demand for a more careful obedience to the various Factory Acts relating to the health of the workers, by the improved work of local health and sanitary authorities, by the better administration of our general hospitals and poor law infirmaries, by the rapidly growing number of sanatoria and convalescent homes,—we have only to consider all these, to see that the warfare against the waste caused by sickness and disease is certainly being waged with increasing vigour.

In the sphere of mental and intellectual life, the campaign against waste is being carried on with equal earnestness. We have realised that, of all the causes of waste, ignorance is one of the most prolific. But there is not a district in England that is not now served by its elementary school, and the great majority of these schools, if slowly, are certainly increasing in efficiency. No child is now permitted to grow up entirely ignorant. We are paying more and more attention to technical, and various kinds of continuation schools;

and most earnest efforts are being made by thoughtful men and women to see that the education received in childhood shall not be lost in youth. By means of bursaries and scholarships of various kinds to secondary schools and to the universities, means are being provided for both boys and girls of exceptional ability to continue their education. We are doing what we can to ensure that talent of any kind shall not be wasted, but shall be carefully trained for the service of the community.

Let us now rise into the sphere of moral and spiritual life, which we may consider together. Let us think of the immense efforts being made, and of the self-sacrifice being exercised, by the Church for the religious instruction of the children, and for the training of teachers to give this. Let us think of the increased interest in Sunday-school work, and of the pains being taken to make this more efficient. Quite apart from, and in addition to, the regular services in the churches, let us think of the number of Bible classes, of missionary meetings of all kinds, of the temperance work, of work on behalf of social purity, of inebriate homes and penitentiaries, of work done among the most degraded by such agencies as the Church Army and the Salvation Army.

Yes, the campagin against waste is vigorous,

and it is progressing. But here, as everywhere, the best we have is due to what Christ has won for us, the best we are doing is due to His inspiration and His strength. The faith in which we work, and whatever wisdom we employ, are alike due to Him.

Let us now turn directly to Him and to His example. Think of Him before His Incarnation contemplating from heaven the actual state of the world, seeing, and being able to estimate, as no human mind could estimate, the waste caused by ignorance and sin. Next, watch His work, even in its smallest details, in the world. What is the meaning of that wonderful fifteenth chapter of St. Luke, containing the stories of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, and the Lost Son, and which rightly has been termed "the Gospel in Miniature"? Why were these parables spoken? The answer is found in those words of the Pharisees and Scribes which immediately precede them, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." The recovery of wasted lives—of those who have been termed the "waste products" of society—was among the very chief of the objects of Jesus. Next, consider the application to our Lord by the Evangelist of the well-known words of one of the "Servant passages" in the Book of Isaiah, "He shall not

strive nor cry aloud: neither shall any one hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory." The quietness of Christ's working is very striking, as is His effort and care to provoke as little opposition as possible, and so not to have to expend energy in overcoming it. Think of His tender solicitude for those who needed, whether spiritually or physically, to be, as it were, coaxed to live, like a plant which shows signs of withering or a fire which will not burn,—it was this tender solicitude, that even the most unpromising lives should not be wasted, that struck the Evangelist; and the conviction that this is the true interpretation of the passage is further confirmed when we remember that the quotation occurs after a description of Jesus withdrawing Himself from the strife which the Pharisees were stirring up, and also after the words "many followed Him and He healed them all." Every single work of healing is an instance of prevention of waste; for the man who has full use of his limbs or eyes or ears can, if he will, get far more out of life, and be far more useful, than the lame, or the blind, or the deaf. Then the great activity of Christ, whether physical or spiritual, whether in doing or teaching, is a proof of His careful economy of

time. Lastly, on both the occasions when He fed a multitude He gave careful directions that not even the fragments of food left over should be wasted, but they should be gathered up for future use.

The whole range of Christ's teaching work is a campaign against waste; and, as I have already shown, of all causes of waste, ignorance is one of the most prolific; so, of all economists and promoters of economy, the teacher may be the most influential. Do not interpret this only of the teacher who shows us how to use material things wisely; it is much more true of those teachers who enable us to use life itself wisely. Among such teachers Christ stands supreme. And Christ not only shows us how to use life wisely, He gives us the power to do it. I have spoken of the wastefulness of ignorance, but the waste caused by sin is even greater. Through sin we waste not only our own lives, but the lives of many others. And it is Christ who redeems us from sin, and so from the incalculable waste of which it is the cause.

The work of the Church—I use the word in the most comprehensive sense—and the work of the Christian is to carry on the work of Christ. Like Him we must be economists of life. This is one reason, indeed the chief of all reasons, for

our warfare aginst sin. And "conversion," so a great teacher has said, "is the mark of a standing or a falling Church," that is, of a Church which is or is not fulfilling its mission; and by conversion is meant the change from sin to righteousness, from that which wastes and destroys, to that which conserves and saves and edifies. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost—the wasted life.

But, alas! how few professing Christians realise this responsibility, the responsibility of the individual taking his share in the work of reclamation! There is a twofold waste proceeding. Thousands who profess the Name of Christ are wasting their energies and their opportunities; while from ignorance and sin tens of thousands of others are living wasted lives because of the insufficiency in the number of workers to reclaim them. One of the tasks to which the unemployed have been set has been the reclamation of waste ground. Is there not a parallel suggested by the very words? I know what a large, I believe a constantly increasing, number of earnest men and women are engaged in the work of social and religious reclamation; yet when one compares the number of actual workers with the number of those who might take part in the work, but

are not doing so, one cannot help thinking of wasted energy which might be directed and applied to the highest of all purposes, the purpose of Christ.

We English people are sometimes charged by foreigners with wastefulness as a nation. By those who know intimately the life of the slums of our large towns, and who at the same time know upon what trivial objects many rich people spend a very considerable proportion of both their money and their time, the charge is one which cannot be entirely refuted. Among the very poor we find lives wasted from sheer inability to provide even what is necessary for physical efficiency; among the rich we find an expenditure upon luxury and pleasure which cannot truthfully be described by any other word than *waste*.

Oh, do let us think of Christ as the Great Economist of life! Then we shall remember how He teaches us to look upon all we have, not as possessions which we can use or enjoy or waste just as we will; instead, He teaches us to look upon ourselves as stewards, and upon all our possessions as material for stewardship. He bids us regard life and all its opportunities as a stewardship committed to us by God. The charge against the unfaithful steward in the parable was

that he had *wasted* his master's goods. It was because of this wastefulness that his stewardship was taken from him. And it is instructive to remember that the Greek word for stewardship is that from which our word economy, the opposite to wastefulness, comes.

To those who have leisure and means the message surely must be, Regard these as part of a stewardship for which you must give account. One duty of the faithful and wise steward was to see that those for whom he was responsible did not want. And we cannot say, I am not my poorer brother's keeper. It is not charity the poor want so much as opportunity to become what it lies within them to be. The task may be a difficult one to discharge, but it cannot, because it is difficult, be shirked.

To those who have very little the message must be, Use the little you have to the very best advantage. Poverty has its temptations as certainly as wealth. There is the constant temptation to say, Because I have so little it is not worth while to make the best use of this little. This was the temptation to which the man with the one talent succumbed.

We are told that before Christ broke the bread to feed the multitudes, He looked up to heaven. The action was significant. Christ remembered

whence life and all that sustains life comes. To do that is to remember our responsibility to God for its right use. In His teaching us this, in His giving us the example of His own method, we see Christ as the Greatest of all Economists.

XIV

CHRIST AND INFLUENCE

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men."—ST. MATT. v. 13.

THE exact position of these words in the Sermon on the Mount must be carefully remembered. They follow immediately after the Beatitudes—those sayings in which Christ had described the various qualities of character essential to the citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, for one who would obey the rule which He had come on earth to establish and extend. A citizen of that Kingdom, Christ had just taught His hearers, must be humble-minded; he must grieve over the sin and the various evils which exist in the world; he must be gentle; he must desire righteousness above all things; he must be merciful; he must be pure-minded in the fullest sense of the words; he must do all in his power to promote peace; and he

must be prepared to suffer in order that righteousness may be promoted and extended.

A character which fulfils these conditions, that is, a character of which these virtues are the factors, is the character desired by Christ, and such a character is His own.

Immediately after this description has been given, as soon as ever this ideal has been set up as the standard, Christ addresses the words of the text to those who were following and learning from Him. To them He looked to cultivate this character. And for a moment He thinks of them, not as they actually were, but as He would have them be. For a moment He treats them as if His ideal for them was already realised in them. He does not say ye shall be, but "ye *are* the salt of the earth."

Christ always chooses His similes and illustrations with special care. But frequently it is only after long and patient study that we fully realise how exactly suited they are to teach the particular lesson He wished to point out. It is only when we think carefully of what the actual conditions of society were then, it is only when we also realise what Christ would have His followers become and do—it is only then that we see how very suitable is this simile drawn from the nature and action of salt to express both. Salt is a great pre-

servative; it also gives a relish to what we eat; without salt many kinds of food are tasteless and insipid; it is also penetrative in its effects. But salt will only produce the desired effect when it is mixed with, or rubbed into, that which we desire to preserve or make palatable. Again, it is only applied to dead matter, to that which, if left to itself, would become corrupt, putrid, unwholesome, but which, if carefully salted, may sustain and strengthen life.

The Sermon on the Mount was addressed to disciples of Christ, to those who were learning from Him, and who were therefore under His influence. It was through influencing them, and through their influencing others, who should yet do the same to a still wider circle, that Christ meant His own influence to penetrate throughout the whole human race. Christ's disciples in all ages and everywhere were to penetrate, to sweeten, to preserve society, also to make it fit to purify, strengthen, and sustain human nature. Hence it is of *influence* that Christ is speaking, and specially of the nature and purpose of His own influence, whether immediate or through others. It is first of Christ's own influence; secondly, of the responsibility of influence generally, that influence which is mediated through personal intercourse, through the penetrating and diffusive force of

character; and, thirdly, of the influence of ideas conveyed by words and actions, by teaching and conduct, that I would ask you to consider now.

Let us consider briefly the actual present condition, and also the natural tendencies of what we term society. Many people will tell us that society has enormously improved; they assert that people are not only more civilised, but that they are more moral, and indeed in every way generally better than they used to be. In defence of these statements they will refer to the moral and social conditions both of the Old World and also of the Middle Ages, even to the conditions in this and other nations, say a hundred or fifty years ago. That there have been many and widespread improvements in social life I am quite ready to admit. I believe that in our own and in many other countries a higher value is placed on human life. I believe that the public conscience has grown sharper in regard to social justice, in regard to the rights of the poor and the oppressed, in regard also to the responsibilities which the possession of wealth or property should entail. But to what are these improvements due? Are they not due to the diffusion of a spirit which is essentially Christian, and is not this diffusion due to persistent Christian teaching, and to the

influence issuing from an example set by very many earnest Christian people?

Apart from the influence of Christianity, history does not warrant us in placing much trust in the probability of continuous moral progress; it does not furnish examples of even civilisation (so-called) continuously rising, and of society becoming steadily more just, more pure, more really humane. On the contrary, moral life and social life—and certainly what we call "civilisation"—seem to have within themselves, like physical life, the seeds of degeneration, corruption, and decay. The present condition of more than one land and one people on the shores of the Mediterranean (the home of an advanced civilisation two thousand years ago) seems to offer a striking proof of the truth of this. History is the only witness to which we can here appeal; and history seems to say to us, with a voice which cannot be mistaken, that if our present social life is to progress morally, if it is to make any progress in the true sense, if it is not actually to deteriorate, it must in the future contain within itself, in far larger measure than has been the case in the past, a factor which is preservative, purifying, and stimulating. That factor is true Christianity; it is the influence of Christ.

The words, "Ye are the salt of the earth," are

an assertion of responsibility and also an exhortation. They assert the responsibility of every one who calls himself a Christian, first, to possess an influence for good; secondly, to exert this influence upon society.

There are few subjects upon which we need to speak with greater care than when we are trying to give an estimate of the actual influence of Christianity, say, in our own country at the present time. This, however, we may assert without fear of contradiction, that this influence is far less than it might be, and it is so for two reasons: first, because individually our Christianity is neither so real nor so earnest as it might be; and secondly, because as Christians we are so disunited. This second cause is largely the result of the first.

Do we realise our responsibility for influence as individuals? I fear not; and one reason is, because at present we are in the midst of a reaction against a false and somewhat selfish form of individualism, one which was much in vogue in the immediate past. But there is a true and useful, as well as a false, individualism. While the false individualism laid far too much stress upon privileges, it forgot responsibilities. The true individualism will correct this, and will think primarily of duty: it will put this in the first

place. It will not think of religion only, or even chiefly, as a means of securing an entrance into heaven hereafter. It will rather regard it as a means whereby we may do good among men and so help to establish the Kingdom of God. But we cannot do good unless we are good; we cannot diffuse what we do not possess. We cannot exert a power which we have not. Hence the individual responsibility of assimilating as well as of diffusing Christian influence, hence the duty of assimilating it through close spiritual communion with Christ before we can exert it upon men.

"If the salt have lost its saltness, it is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men." There are few more terrible words than these; and they are so terrible because they are so widely true. Do notice their form. Christ does not say, if the salt *shall* lose its saltness, as if He referred to a very rare possibility. He says if the salt *have lost* its saltness, as if His mind was dwelling upon something only too likely to be true. Take that word "lost," which surely points to something at one time possessed, but possessed no longer. Christ is not thinking of those who never had the influence which comes of the possession of spiritual power; He is rather thinking of those

who have had it and have it no longer, because they have lost that from which it alone can issue. How true here, as everywhere, Christ is to experience! What a wonderful insight His words reveal! How small the influence of some of us is for Christ! But why? Let us ask ourselves whether the loss of what is termed spirituality or spiritual life will not account for it? Possibly there was a time, it may have been in those early years of manhood or womanhood when enthusiasms seem to come more naturally than in later years, it may be that then we had, at least for a time, a genuine enthusiasm for Christianity, that is for Christ. Then His nearness to us, His presence, His power seemed more real than they do to-day. Perhaps then we undertook some genuine religious study, we prayed earnestly; we felt, too, the reality and hatefulness of sin, we desired forgiveness for ourselves, we desired also to help others, and we made some honest self-sacrifice in order to do some Christian work. But gradually our Christian enthusiasm became cooler; little by little the soul of it departed. And now, if we come to examine ourselves honestly and without flinching, we may find that we have retained little more than the external shell of a Christian life. We still, by a measure of observance of Christian

customs (like attendance at public worship), retain a "form of godliness," but our want of Christian influence, our failure to exert it, is only too sure a proof that the "power" has largely gone: "the salt has lost its saltness."

Let us think once more of Christ's final words: "It is good for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men." How terrible, I repeat, is this verdict! A sham religion, an unreal Christianity is, like the one who professes it, and whom men call a hypocrite, bound to be despised. The really religious man does not despise him, for Christ despises no man. Christ tries to save all men, and that which is despised is not an object for salvation. The really religious man deplores the effect of unreality, both upon the man himself and upon others. The worldly man does despise the hypocrite, and is inclined to interpret, and so to value, or rather despise, religion itself through him. The professing Christian, without Christian influence, without power for Christ, is a very real stumbling-block in the way of righteousness, in the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Oh, do let us examine this responsibility of exercising our personal influence for good! If we find we have little or no such influence, do not let us be tempted, as so many are tempted, to lay the blame on our circumstances, on what

we are apt to term "the difficult position" in which we are placed. Let us rather examine the condition of our own spiritual health; let us try to estimate the nature of our communion with Christ. We may find that neither "health" nor "communion," in the true sense of the words, is ours. We may find that we must rather speak of the want of spiritual strength, and of our separateness from Christ. Let us then determine by God's help to seek for a closer communion with Christ, for a richer and stronger life with Him. If we seek these He will not fail to give them. He will fan into a flame the dying embers of the fire of His love which perhaps at one time burnt brightly in our hearts.

Remember that search and effort and cultivation must precede possession, and that until we possess we can neither exercise nor diffuse.

We must be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength, for only then can we exert that influence for good upon all around us which, remember, is the first of all responsibilities laid by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount upon those who professed to be His disciples.

XV

CHRIST AND WORRY

"The Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful."—ST. LUKE x. 41, 42.

[R.V. margin reads, "but few things are needful, or one."]

THESE words, you will remember, are taken from the brief description of the well-known scene in the home of Martha and Mary at Bethany. And few episodes, even in the Gospel narrative, are more familiar to us than this. What wonderful artists the sacred writers are! They know how to paint with just the few absolutely essential and perfectly correct strokes. There is not one too many, and not one is out of place. Here we have a home, a scene in that home, two characters, and a wealth of teaching from the Lord Jesus, all sketched in and made to live before our eyes and in our memories within the space of just five verses. What a rebuke to our prolixity!

We might have taken a whole chapter to

describe what is here told in twenty lines, and we should probably have left the reader with a far less vivid and a far less correct impression. The very form of the narrative teaches us the chief lesson it contains—the importance of seizing upon the essential, and how comparatively few of the things we are apt to consider necessary really are so. It is upon choosing the really essential things in life, and in laying stress upon these, that true welfare depends.

How clearly, how vividly we see Martha, the good-hearted, bustling, over-anxious mistress and very-much-manager of the household! She is so very busy about so very many things; and all the time she is firmly convinced in her own mind that all she does and all she would provide is absolutely necessary. Not one of all this multitude of things must be wanting. Custom, and her own reputation in her own eyes and among her neighbours, demand them all. The amount of mental and physical energy which she consumed in providing and preparing and arranging the "many things" which she deemed necessary, she probably never computed, nor did she stay for a moment to consider whether she had forgotten one or two things which in intrinsic worth might be of far greater value than the sum total of all the other things about which she was

busying herself. Her mind was too divided to think clearly: part of it was running on this thing and part on that, and yet another part on something else; and her bodily movements were a reflection of her mental ones. As we say, she was all the time in a bustle, running here and there, anxious, distracted, worried; and because she was so, she was much inclined to blame others, even the Lord Jesus, who were really guiltless of the cause of her unhappiness.

Contrast her with her sister Mary, to whom the opportunity—a short one, and one which would quickly pass—of sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus and listening to Him outweighed in importance everything else at the moment. Besides making the most of this opportunity, just then nothing else mattered. And very probably Mary had a far keener insight into the mind of the Great Teacher, who was there for so short a time, than had the anxious and worried, if kind-hearted, Martha.

When guests enter our house it is right that we should seek to provide them with all that they can need; we would go further, and would offer them what we believe will give them the greatest pleasure. We say to ourselves that we hope they will enjoy their sojourn with us. But do we ever ask in what the true enjoyment of our most

worthy guests consists? Do we not too often see their pleasures only through our own eyes, and decide, according to the accepted standards of the conventional which rule us, what they ought to enjoy, rather than take the trouble to enter into their feelings? Is there not often at least a measure of pride, a desire to give ourselves satisfaction, in the nature of the hospitality which we offer? How often when we have been the guests of others would not some of us have gladly given up three-fourths of what was set before us to eat and to drink in exchange for half-an-hour's quiet conversation with some thoughtful person in the neighbourhood we were visiting! For then we could have enjoyed that refreshment of soul, that stimulus of a mind greater and richer than our own, which the busy often need far more than mere bodily satisfaction.

May not Jesus have felt something of this that day in the home at Bethany? He lived a busy life, and His interests were centred on a great purpose. He sought for opportunities to influence others, to teach them the precious truths He had come into this world to reveal. He would know Mary's anxiety to learn, possibly that she might impart what she had learnt to other women. To help her in this high purpose would be to Jesus far greater enjoyment than to partake of all the

material things Martha was so anxiously providing. And, besides, by her bustling to and fro, Martha was actually preventing those few minutes of quiet so precious both to Jesus and to Mary His disciple.

Martha, like a great many well-meaning people to-day, was evidently the slave of convention, and to do what was the fashion was, in her eyes as in the opinion of so many, to do the "right" thing. Is it not true that the majority of people who wish to be hospitable, and to show kindness and honour and respect, simply ask themselves what, under the circumstances, is the *usual* thing to do? For in their opinion the usual is only another term for the right thing. They would do what fashion demands. But fashion is a hard taskmaster. He runs up many accounts, but does he pay many bills? And what does being in the fashion too often mean? Does it not mean obtaining and displaying and using what those who are richer than ourselves possess? It too often means a display (at the cost of much labour and anxiety) of our possession of the material things of life. And then the greater part of both our time and our energy must be directed towards these things—towards obtaining and displaying and taking care of them. We must remember that all material things are to

be sought and are useful just in so far as, and no further, than they minister to the higher life. A comfortable, well-ordered, healthy house will so minister; but the moment the house and its contents became an end, rather than a means to an end, the true order of importance has been reversed. A sufficiency of plain and wholesome food ministers to the higher life, for in health we can think more clearly, work harder, and be more useful to others; but the moment the care for eating and drinking goes beyond this, the true order of things has been lost. Once more, a reasonable amount of recreation ministers to the usefulness of life, for it also promotes and tends to maintain health, and so the powers of usefulness; but when energy is consumed in providing the means for expensive amusements (often because these are fashionable), and when much time is consumed in taking part in them, in this case also a sense of proportion has been lost. The "judgment values" of life, upon whose correctness so much depends, are in all these cases false. It is still only too frequently true that in being so anxious about the means of living we often deprive ourselves of the opportunity for life itself.

Our Lord says, "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but a

few things are needful." And St. Paul says, "Stand fast therefore in the freedom wherewith Christ hath made you free." And these words of St. Paul's seem extremely applicable to the subject before us; for Christ has, if we have accepted the liberty He has given us, set us free from "many things." But have we fulfilled, are we fulfilling, the conditions of that liberty? Are we not rather the slaves of many a worldly conventionality which causes us far more worry and far greater anxiety than we would care to confess? Does not Christ tell us that it was "for judgment that He came into the world"? And the function of judgment is to give right decisions, and, among these, correct estimates of intrinsic value. Thus Christ will help us to decide upon the true value of many possessions and many objects of anxious effort upon which our own judgments are often seriously at fault.

In one place Christ speaks with great plainness upon the subject. In the Parable of the Sower He tells us that some of the seed—and by the seed is meant that which contains the principle of the higher life, that which is essential to the development of that life—some of the seed fell among the thorns. These thorns represent "the anxieties, riches, and pleasures of this life," which grow and choke the seed and render it unfruitful.

The very order of these evils is suggestive; first anxieties, then riches, then pleasures. How anxious some people seem to be not merely to have enough, but to be rich, and that in order to be able to enjoy what are by convention regarded as the pleasures of this world, but which all the time are a cause of weariness of soul to many who participate in them, and in the meanwhile there is no bringing what should be the true fruit of life to perfection.

Think of the contrast between freedom in and through Christ, and of slavery to the conventions, the fashions of the world. As redeemed by Christ, as free in Him, we ought to enjoy the fullest opportunity for the development of the highest life; but actually this is too often prevented by the slavery which I have been describing. How then can we enjoy the freedom which Christ has potentially won for us? Christ is the Light of the World; He is also the Wisdom of God and the Power of God.

The secret of the highest and purest success in life lies in the ability first to choose and then to make effort after those things which are of really greatest worth. Of course, together with this choice, there must be a ceasing to strive after things of no intrinsic or permanent value. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Seek ye first

His kingdom and His righteousness." Now ability to choose rightly, and also to obtain, implies the possession of all the three qualities of Christ which I have just mentioned, namely, Light, Wisdom, and Power.

These we may obtain from Him; and before we can use them we must obtain them. By means of light we see things as they are; we discern their real nature, we can estimate their relative greatness or smallness. Only in the light, only, that is, in possession of the completest knowledge available, must we choose and select. This selection also implies skill, which is the true meaning of wisdom. The truly wise man is the man who can both choose and use skilfully. Christ's wisdom is seen in His choices, in His decisions. The proof of His wisdom is seen in the results of these. Christ chooses, and He teaches us to choose those things which are of permanent value and which satisfy the highest parts of our nature. Our want of wisdom is seen in our frequent rejection of these things for objects which give only a very temporary satisfaction, and that only to the lower part of our nature.

But in addition to light or knowledge, in addition also to choice or decision, we need power. We need power to do what we know

we ought to do and have chosen to do. Remember St. Paul's words, "The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practise."

Light, wisdom, power are three conditions of freedom—of the freedom which, as a possibility, Christ has won for us. To obtain them we must possess Him. He is the One needful, they are the few things needful. Possession and use of these will prevent that worry which wears out life, that distraction which, in its endless seeking after things of comparatively little value, destroys even its own object. In its constant search after what it considers necessary as means of living it forgets life itself.

XVI

CHRIST AND FREEDOM

"The truth shall make you free."—ST. JOHN viii. 32.
"If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—ST. JOHN viii. 36.
"I am the truth."—ST. JOHN xiv. 6.

HERE we have three assertions made by Christ upon three subjects of infinite importance—freedom, truth, and Himself; and you will notice that each assertion deals with two of the three subjects, the first with truth and freedom, the second with Christ and freedom, the third with truth and Christ.

As my subject is Christ and freedom, how Christ gives freedom, or how true freedom can only be attained through Christ, I will take the subject of freedom first.

A desire for freedom, a desire to possess and enjoy it, appears to be so universal that we may regard this desire as natural to man, as innate in him.

It has been said, and with much justification,

that the histories of man, society, and civilisation are all parts of one long history of effort and struggle after freedom. Then, certainly the object of all education, which may be said to progress with civilisation — the object of all education worthy of the name—is freedom. And this is with far greater truth the object of all real Christianity; not only because Christianity is the greatest factor in all true civilisation, but because Christianity destroys and removes every chain and barrier and obstacle which prevents freedom.

The subject of freedom is one which has many aspects. Did not a great scholar of the last generation dedicate a lifetime to writing a history of the world-wide and age-long effort after its attainment? He amassed enormous stores of material for his purpose, but his search after this material became so fascinating, and the wealth of material itself became so great, that at last it became more than he could compass, and he died without using it.

What do we mean by freedom? Are we quite clear upon the nature of our subject? Or are those who seek it always clear upon the nature of their object? May it not be that when we put such an immense value upon freedom we may actually be worshipping that of which we have no very adequate conception?

May not this be one cause of the frequently unsatisfactory result of our efforts? Or is it not possible that we are pursuing our quest in a wrong way, in a manner which condemns this quest to failure?

Of the possibility of this seeking for freedom in a wrong way there is in the Gospel a very striking example, which is also a very eloquent warning, I mean the familiar story of the Prodigal Son. The Prodigal Son desired freedom; he determined to have it and enjoy it, but he determined to have it in his own way, and according to his own conception of it. "Give *me*," he said to his father, "the portion of the substance that falleth to me": let me be free to do as I wish, to go where I wish, to use what I have as I like. The result, we know, was an absolute failure; instead of enjoying freedom, he had to endure the most complete and degrading slavery.

"The truth," says my first text, "shall make you free." In these few brief words the method and the means whereby alone freedom can be obtained are plainly set forth. In the New Testament "the truth" is frequently a synonym for "the ideal"; it is what God meant to be, it is what ought to be. We acknowledge this when we speak of the "true" father, or the "true" teacher, or the "true" friend, by whom we

mean what a father, or a teacher, or a friend ought to be. To grasp this meaning of truth is the first key to success in the search or effort after freedom. Thus the true man or woman is what man or woman ought to be, is what God meant them to be, is what Christ's redemption of them from the power of sin, and what the work of the Holy Spirit within them (if these are accepted and used by faith) will enable them to be. Thus the search after freedom is *not* the search after opportunity and power to do what we *like*. Freedom can only be obtained indirectly; it can only be gained by seeking to be and to do what we ought.

There are two chief kinds of freedom which may be considered separately, but which are not to be sharply divided, because each is to a great extent dependent on the other. These are intellectual freedom and moral freedom. Intellectual freedom means deliverance from ignorance, the source of many errors; it also means deliverance from prejudices and from all the mere "babble of human opinion." If we would realise the want of freedom imposed by ignorance we have only to travel or to live for a time in a country with whose language we are not familiar. We find that we are denied a freedom we desire at every turn. We cannot even ask for much that

we want; we cannot explain what we wish to do or where we wish to go; we cannot describe to others either our feelings or our thoughts. We are hampered at every turn. At the same time the process of learning a new language may not be pleasant, but in this case the labour, the self-discipline, the perseverance which it demands, form the only road to freedom. Let us take another example. If we are in the company of men who are earnestly discussing some great and important subject of which we ourselves are ignorant, we are not free to enter into debate with them, for we cannot understand the terms they use, and so their thoughts, of which these are the expression. Or, again, we may be ignorant of the right way to seek some goal or object at which we would arrive. We may wander aimlessly about, for we are not free in the true sense to choose the path by which we should travel. At last some one, dispelling our ignorance, points this out to us: knowledge of the true has again bestowed freedom. Once more, we may have been prejudiced against some particular school of thought, or some philosophy of life, some religious teaching, even some political or social opinion. So long as we are prejudiced we are not free to appreciate at its true value the usefulness or the importance of any of these.

Prejudice implies at least imperfect knowledge and imperfect judgment, and so it implies a want of truth. Consequently, once more, want of truth means want of freedom. Christ's assertion is proved in every case; the truth, and only the truth can make us free.

The second kind of freedom is *moral* freedom, which must mean freedom from sin, and so freedom to overcome temptation. We do not realise with sufficient clearness how, by certain actions frequently performed and so growing into habits, we are forging for ourselves bonds or chains which ultimately it becomes impossible for us to break. The origin of these actions was probably due to the determination to do as we liked rather than as we ought. I am not referring only to such conduct or habits as those of the drunkard, or the sensualist, or the criminal. What I am saying refers just as surely, for instance, to those who will neither think strenuously nor work strenuously, and who thus become gradually the slaves of slackness, who little by little become incapable of either clear or hard thinking or steady and persistent working, and who, from the want of stern self-discipline, gradually drift into the ranks of the partially on wholly incapable. They drift into such a condition that they are free

neither to think as they ought or to do as they ought.

How then may freedom, true freedom, be attained and preserved? The answer is given in the condition, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." This answer also warns us—by the use of the word "indeed"—that besides the true freedom there are specious imitations of this blessed privilege; there are forms of freedom which are not freedom "indeed." The original of this last word also implies that true freedom is from within, and comes from within, and that it is not external coercion, but some inward condition which deprives us of it.

I would ask you to notice very carefully the form of the condition—"If the Son shall make you free." The word son in the New Testament seems to add to the idea of relationship the idea of privilege. We may remember what St. Paul said: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." If to these words we add some other words of the same apostle—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty"—we see the *inwardness* of the source of true freedom. Its source is a spirit, a spirit of filial dependence upon God, a spirit obtained and strengthened by communion with Christ, received by us from Him. How close

and how real this communion must be is emphasised by St. John in the passage where he goes further than to speak of receiving *from* Christ; he speaks of receiving Christ *Himself*: "to as many as received Him gave He the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe on His name," that is, who believe on all that Christ's "Name" implies; and belief, remember, implies obedience.

Surely the meaning is clear! Namely that true freedom depends on our possession of the nature of Christ, also upon our obedience to the method of Christ. The possession of the first means close communion with Him, and so with God through Him; the second implies self-discipline issuing in self-sacrifice, for this is the method of Christ. If we could only realise this, how much greater and more real would our freedom become!

Let us try to gather the thoughts together which the three sayings in the text seem to suggest. The desire for freedom is innate, every human being longs to enjoy it. We were therefore, we may assume, meant for freedom. It is the condition ordained for each in the purpose of God. But only the truth can give it to us; only when each is fulfilling his purpose can he hope to enjoy it. And Christ stands before us in the

Gospels as possessing it in perfection. He thinks and speaks and acts, He moves in and out among all classes, He deals with all sorts and conditions of men, with perfect freedom. He is free from ignorance, free from error, free from prejudice, free from sin. And Christ is the Ideal Man with an ideal relationship to God. He is the Truth, and in a perfectly true relationship to the Source of all Truth. We see throughout His complete dependence upon God. His service of God is perfect. His life is a wonderful unity, and expresses an entire consistency. It is altogether what we feel it was meant to be. If the truth is the ideal, the perfect, then Christ certainly is the Truth. And He did what, and as, He did because He was what He was. His freedom was evidently an inward freedom.

Let me liken society, the society in the midst of which we live and in which, whether recognised and discharged or not, each one of us has his or her appointed task—let me liken this society to a vast and infinitely complicated machine always revolving and meant to work out the purpose of God. Each of us may be regarded as a tiny piece of the mechanism of that great whole, whose perfection as a whole, indeed whose work depends upon each one of us perfectly filling our appointed task within it. If that

machine is to "run" smoothly, as it should, every tiny wheel must be confined in its own axle-box. Should it "jump its bed," the whole is thrown out of gear. In other words, the freedom of each piece and of the whole depends upon each being confined, or rather confining himself or herself, to his or her proper task. The statement may seem paradoxical, but freedom depends upon the renunciation of freedom. The condition of freedom to us has a striking analogy to that of the separate parts of the great machine; only with us, that is, with beings endowed with at least a measure of free will, freedom depends, not upon external self-restraint, but upon restraint imposed by ourselves from within, in obedience to the teaching of Christ.

Think for one moment of the life of Christ, as told to us in the Gospel. What is the whole course of His ministerial life but one succession of acts of self-restraint? The method He employed to vanquish each of the three temptations was an application of the power of self-restraint; so was His refusal to be made an earthly King; so, again, was His refusal to call down fire on the villages which would not receive Him; so, also, was His declining to call for the help of the ten legions of angels to rout His enemies in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Has not freedom been defined as the ability or power to say "No"? Is not freedom the power to choose the right and to do the right amid the thousand temptations to do wrong? Is it not the power to persevere in climbing the hard and narrow, and often uninteresting path of duty, when a dozen easier and far more interesting and pleasant paths lie open to our choice?

Freedom might be termed another name for strength, strength of physical health, strength of intellect, strength of will and character. And is not rigid self-restraint the condition by which each is won and retained? The athlete who would win in the long race, which demands staying power, imposes on himself a period of strict training, which is only another name for self-discipline; the scholar who would become master of his subject declines to spend his time or mental energy in reading other subjects, however interesting; the man or woman who would walk in safety amongst temptations, practises one long course of self-watchfulness and self-denial.

"The Son shall make you free." We must then obtain by close communion with Christ, and by that alone, the strength of "the strong Son of God." We must follow His example and live according to His methods. "If any man would

come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me." This may be a "hard saying," and we may ask, "Who can bear it?" But nearly two thousand years of experience have proved its truth.

"In His service is perfect freedom." Only in strict obedience to His teaching shall we obtain and retain that perfect freedom which we all quite rightly covet, and the desire and capacity for which has been implanted in us, and which, moreover, it is the divinely ordained purpose that we should enjoy.

XVII

CHRIST AND PROGRESS

"Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."—ST. MATT. xviii. 3.

IF there is one temper of mind, one spiritual or moral or intellectual quality or condition with which our Lord deals more severely than any other, it is that of self-satisfaction.

If there is any one class of people more than another whom He feels to be beyond the reach of His influence and of His help, to whom He feels that He appeals in vain, it is those who are content with themselves as they are.

On the contrary, if there is any one quality of nature or character which above all others He demands, and which He regards most hopefully, it is that of the possibility of growth or progress. To remember this is to possess a key to one saying of Christ's after another which not only astonished, but deeply troubled His first hearers. It will also enable us to understand the true

meaning of many of His most paradoxical utterances.

The proclamation with which Jesus is described as beginning His public ministry is, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." He described His mission as one directed to calling "not the righteous but sinners to repentance." On one occasion He told His hearers that unless they repented they should perish. The work of those whom He first commissioned to help Him in His work is described as preaching everywhere that men should repent. Thus of the immense stress laid by Jesus upon repentance there can be no possible doubt. Now what does repentance imply? It implies a change of conduct consequent upon the accession of new, and therefore fuller and more adequate knowledge. It therefore implies teachableness, readiness to learn, ability and willingness to assimilate and act upon improved information. This attitude of mind is clearly the very opposite of self-satisfaction, which is tantamount to assuming that all which is worth knowing is already known.

This attitude of readiness to learn, and which makes growth and progress possible, is constantly commended by Jesus. The opening words of the Sermon on the Mount are, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of

Heaven." Whatever be the exact meaning of the term "the poor in spirit," it must refer to those who are conscious of their poverty. It must mean the opposite to those who think they know all, and have all, and are everything that is essential to the highest and most complete welfare. The "poor in spirit" are the opposite to the self-satisfied.

Another Beatitude runs: "Blessed are they that mourn." The words are quite general. But the mourners are not those who are entirely satisfied with things as they are, with their position, with their human, as opposed to their merely material circumstances.

A third Beatitude is, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." The antithesis to self-satisfaction could not be more strongly expressed. To be hungry and thirsty is to be conscious of great, pressing, urgent needs, of needs upon whose satisfaction even life itself depends.

Christ's attitude towards the religious world of His own time is explained by His attitude towards self-satisfaction. This attitude astonished even His disciples. They, like others, had been accustomed to look up to the Scribes and Pharisees, to the Scribes as teachers who could explain and apply the Scriptures, to the Pharisees

as practically the *élite* of the religious life of the nation. But Christ constantly brings a severe indictment against both. The saying, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,"—this saying is so familiar to us that we fail to understand the astonishment it must have caused when it was first uttered. It was as if some one were to say to us, Except your righteousness shall exceed that of the most deeply religious men, of the most highly-esteemed workers and teachers in all the churches, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, and especially its final sentence about the latter, "I say unto you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other," must have seemed too paradoxical for belief. The Scribes and Pharisees had other faults than that of self-satisfaction, but it was this fault which made any hope of influencing them so remote in the opinion of Christ; it was because this spirit blocked the path to all moral and spiritual progress that Christ attacked it so relentlessly. Christ's hopelessness of the Pharisees, so long as they retained this spirit of self-satisfaction, is very clearly evident in this passage: "For judgment came

I into this world, that they which see not may see; and that they which see may become blind. Those of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these things, and said unto Him, Are we also blind? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth."

Another striking instance of Christ's relentless exposure and rebuke of this same spirit is found in the long series of "woes," directed against the Scribes and Pharisees, in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew. The first of these charges them with shutting the Kingdom of Heaven against men: they neither entered in themselves nor did they suffer those who were entering to enter. The spirit of self-satisfaction, like other evil spirits, has a diffusive influence, hence our Lord's strong warning to His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees."

Now consider Christ's views and treatment of those who were regarded as belonging to the extreme opposite classes of Jewish society, *e.g.* the "publicans and sinners." Christ mixed quite freely with these, He ate and drank with them, He called a publican to be one of His chosen Twelve; He praised another in the parable to which I have already called attention; He drew a strong contrast in their favour in the parable

of the two sons; He asserted that these classes would go into the Kingdom of Heaven before those who prided themselves on their righteousness. Could any utterance have seemed more strange to those who first heard it than the assertion that "there shall be joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine righteous persons that need no repentance"?

But nowhere does Christ teach the need of growth or progress, nowhere does He more plainly enforce the importance of cultivating the possibility of these, than when He uses the idea or the position of children to explain its true significance. When the disciples rebuked the mothers who brought their children to Him that He might bless them, Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me; forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." Also in answer to the question of the disciples, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" we read that Jesus "called to Him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of

Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

The key to both these passages lies in remembering what the child suggests. The child is the symbol of immaturity: the primary function of the child is to grow. This is the first thing we expect of it, and if the child is not growing we at once conclude, and rightly, that there is something wrong with it. Thus the very thought of the child suggests the possibility, the naturalness, even the duty of growth, not only of physical, but also of mental and moral and spiritual growth. Thus, when our Lord said, pointing to the children, "Of such is the Kingdom of God," He implied that the Kingdom belongs to those who are growing and making progress. When He said, "Except ye turn," He implied, From self-satisfaction with your present position; and when He added, "and become as little children," He asserted that unless you are growing, "ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of God." And we must not forget that, to the demand for growth Christ added the condition of growth, namely, humility, which is the antithesis of pride, which can hardly be separated in thought from self-satisfaction.

Yet how very rare, after a certain age, is intellectual, or moral, or spiritual growth!

If we think of ourselves and the people we know, how content we all seem to be with our present condition, except in regard to material possession! How very few new truths or ideas we assimilate! How rarely do we make a really earnest effort to reach a higher plane of conduct! How even more rarely do we strive to attain a closer communion with God, implying a deeper knowledge of His will!

Yet experience teaches us that what is really important about men and women is not, *where* they are, but *whither* and *how* they are going; it is not, to what they have attained, but how earnestly they are striving to attain.

One reason for the need of this constant growth and progress is that we are always under the influence of tendencies or forces which act in a direction opposite to progress. There is no standing still in life. If there is not growth there is decay; if there is not improvement there is deterioration; if we are not learning we are forgetting; if we are not growing more sympathetic we are becoming narrower and harder.

Christ in this, as in all else, deals with the actual facts of human nature as He finds them, and He takes account of the actual laws by

which it is governed. He sees things as they are. He does not create in His imagination a human nature to which there is nothing actually corresponding. His object is the establishment of the Kingdom of God. But this implies the acceptance and complete use of the growing revelation of God. To do this man must also grow. Man's capacity to use rightly must grow with what is placed within his possibility of use. This means that man must develop morally and spiritually. One of the keys to the many evils of the present lies in this, that man's material resources and his power over the physical world have developed more rapidly than his character. To-day we find many who from want of this moral and spiritual development are rather the slaves than the masters of wealth. They have not risen to their responsibilities. But the necessity to do this, and therefore the effort to do it, Jesus saw, was an essential condition for recognising and obeying the rule of God, in other words that it was essential for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven.

According to the measure of our desire to promote the coming of the Kingdom will be our earnestness in cultivating the spirit of humility, and so the feeling of dissatisfaction with our own moral and spiritual condition. We

shall realise the paramount necessity of a growing knowledge of God, also of an increasing sense of the many imperfections within and outside ourselves which need to be removed. We shall thus echo again and again the words of the great apostle: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."

XVIII

CHRIST AND CONSISTENCY

"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation."—ST. MATT. xii. 25.

"No man putteth a piece of new cloth into an old garment."—ST. MATT. ix. 16.

OF all the difficult tasks of life the most difficult is to be uniformly consistent at a high level, that is to maintain steadily the highest standard of principle and conduct and never to sink below it. Yet this is what Christ did: He perfectly accomplished it, and He would have us achieve it. His life, and by His life I here mean His conduct—every word and action of His—was, if we may use the expression, "all of a piece." There were no flaws, no blemishes, no inconsistencies in it. Each part agreed perfectly and entirely with every other part. Christ's righteousness was perfect because His holiness was perfect. Do remember that holiness demands not only righteousness, but, as the sound of the word suggests (it matters not how it is spelt),

that which is really holy must be *wholly* righteous.

There are two ways in which we way view the entirely consistent life, namely from within and from without, and therefore we shall find that there are two chief causes for inconsistency. First, a life may be inconsistent because its inward power, which should consecrate and direct all its various factors, is not strong enough to achieve this purpose or to accomplish this object. Secondly, a life may be inconsistent because attempts are made to add to the life material gathered here and there from outside it, which is not of the same material as the life—fragments, that is, which neither agree with one another nor with the life itself. A beautiful life has been likened to a poem—a creation under a Divine inspiration. And has not an old heathen moralist warned us of the futility of trying to compose a poem by the process of the addition of inharmonious fragments, however beautiful each of these may be in itself? The two sayings of Christ which I have chosen for my text reveal these two causes of inconsistency. The first describes the imperfectly ruled life and therefore the divided life; the second describes the incongruously patched life. By His homely analogies of the divided kingdom and the patched garment Christ makes quite clear the

instability of the life which is not under perfect control, also the futility of attempting to make useful that which has no strength in itself, the absurdity of assuming that it can be made to bear stress and strain, by merely adding here and there fragments of some stronger material.

Let us think of the first cause of inconsistency, that arising from a want of unity within the nature or character. Self-examination, if honestly carried out, will soon reveal to us that within, as it were, the womb of our being, whence our conduct issues, two powers—a higher and a lower—are constantly struggling for the mastery; these are the power which tends to righteousness and the power which tends to sin. And the longer and the deeper our experience of life the more certainly may we feel, that for safety and the accomplishment of life's true purpose it is an essential condition that the lower must be not partially but wholly subdued to the higher. Where this victory is incomplete inconsistency of conduct must inevitably issue. This is why Christ demands that we should give ourselves wholly and entirely to Him—the perfect Righteousness: this is why He will have no imperfect or divided allegiance. This is why He lays such immense stress upon the essential inwardness of true religion. We are apt to give far too narrow

an interpretation to the idea of purity, which really means that which is unmixed. If we remember this we shall see the absolute necessity of purity of heart. We shall understand the importance of the command, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it," as a stream from its source, "are the issues of life."

In connection with this first aspect of consistency, namely as the result of an infinitely powerful central governing motive, our Lord's own consistency is clearly seen when placed in contrast with the inconsistency of even His chosen disciples, who were yet to a great degree under His own personal influence. I will not refer to the extreme case of Judas Iscariot, but only to the rest of the Twelve. Many instances of their failing to be ruled by the highest motive might be given. Take the incidents of the feeding of the multitudes. As Christ looks upon the weary, hungry, shepherdless crowds, His whole heart goes out in compassion towards them. He cannot bear to think that night should fall upon them as they are. On the other hand, the inconsistency of the disciples—as professing to be followers of One Who would help to the uttermost—is revealed by their advice, "Send them away." Again, Christ declared that He "came not to be ministered unto but to minister," and

His whole life was consistently one of entire service, in return for which service He asked no honour or reward; but the disciples, while professing to follow Him, argue warmly as to the order of precedence which shall exist among them; and when the time for the feet-washing comes, no one of them is prepared to do this simple service for the others. Once more Christ sees and teaches the necessity for cross-bearing. He realises the need of infinite patience in dealing with others; but certain of the disciples would call down fire from heaven upon those villagers who would not receive them. Then in the supper room Peter and the rest of the eleven strongly expressed their intention of remaining faithful even unto death to their beloved Master, and no doubt they fully believed they would be so; but their rapid flight from the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter's repeated denials of any connection with Jesus, proved only too surely that as yet their lower nature was far from being completely in subjection to the higher. In every one of these instances we find the life is imperfectly disciplined; the fire of the Divine Love, the true source of entire devotion, has neither purged away the dross nor fused the various parts together.

After the Resurrection, with its strengthening

effect upon their faith, and after the reception in all its fulness of the gift of the Holy Spirit, we find far less inconsistency in these immediate followers of our Master. St. Peter's want of moral courage at Antioch, as described by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, and St. Paul's own want of sympathy with the young man John Mark, as told at the end of the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, may be cited as instances in which even the greatest Christians have occasionally fallen below the high level at which their conduct was generally maintained. But the immense change marked in the character of the apostles, when we pass from the Gospels to the Acts, is a striking proof of what a stronger faith and a deeper and fuller spirituality will effect. By the Resurrection, faith, the motive power of conduct, has been, I repeat, enormously strengthened, and by the indwelling of the Spirit every part of the life has been equally purified and consecrated.

Of the second kind of inconsistency, which may be described as the result of attempting to add fragments of higher and better conduct to a life which at heart and as a whole is ruled by lower motives, we have constant instances in the Gospels. This was the kind of inconsistency which Christ was continually exposing, and as frequently rebuking, in the Pharisees. Here we do not find

a nature imperfectly devoted to God; we rather find a nature which is essentially, that is at heart, irreligious, but to which certain externals of religion are from time to time added. The disciples before the Resurrection were honestly devoted to Christ; they meant to be faithful to Him, but as yet they were unequal to the strength of the temptations which assailed them. But many of the charges brought by our Lord against the Pharisees prove that with them even the intention to do right was wanting. The inconsistency of the men who for the sake of personal gain will rob widows' houses, and at the same time habitually pray in public, is very different from that of the men who, under the stress of persecution, occasionally decline from the highest level of conduct. So, again, is the inconsistency of those who having no real desire to enter into the will of God, that is who have no wish to do justly or to show mercy, but who are scrupulous about small ceremonial observances being punctiliously performed,—the inconsistency of such men is, I say, very different from the inconsistency of those who, taken off their guard, in some sudden emergency fail to act in the most Christian spirit.

There are many reasons or causes for this second kind of inconsistency which we may term that of

the patchwork life. It may arise from the combination of an entirely irreligious spirit with a desire to do what custom prescribes; for instance, a perfunctory performance of the external forms of worship: again, it may arise from superstition ruling where religion should reign, and, in consequence, from the fostering of a hope that God may be propitiated by certain acts of devotion which are apart from, indeed contrary to the general tenor of the life: it may, though we hope it rarely does, arise from a carefully calculated intention to blind the eyes of others, and by a profession of righteousness to find a useful cloak to cover effectually a definitely evil purpose, or an evil course of life.

From the time of our Lord down to the present day, that is during the whole course of Christian history, we find numberless examples of both kinds of inconsistency. And if at any time or anywhere we find that Christianity has failed to make progress or has suffered a temporary defeat, we shall generally also find that its weakness arose from its being infected by one or other of these inconsistencies, rather than that its defeat was due to the intrinsic strength of the forces opposed to it. The first kind of inconsistency—that arising from an *imperfect* Christianity—seems from the first to have inevitably accompanied

the missionary enterprise of the Church; while the second kind—that arising from a merely *nominal* Christianity—seems to have been rife whenever it became the correct thing at least to profess to be a Christian. Both kinds of inconsistency have always been, as they are to-day, great weaknesses to Christianity. The first kind has constantly tempted men to doubt the strength of Christianity: the second kind has always furnished the chief target for the missiles of the scoffer.

Let us now turn to the conditions of the present, as they surround us to-day. But before we notice and lament the inconsistencies of others, let us be very careful to examine our own conduct. Which of us can look into our own life without seeing many and painful proofs of how imperfect is our devotion to Christ? Which of us can say that we do not give many an occasion to the enemy to blaspheme? Both imperfect and nominal Christianity may be personal in their causes, the root of both is doubtless within ourselves, but the results of them are always far more than personal; they are very widely social, for they affect the lives of far more people than we know, more indeed than we can imagine. We live, it must be remembered, in a busy age, in an age in which

people confess to us they have little time for serious study, and still less for serious thought. Thus men are inclined to read while they run, and to read only what forces itself upon their attention. The result of all this, it has been truly said, is that many people are only too content to form their impression of Christianity from their observation of the conduct of professing Christians, instead of from a careful study of the New Testament. Thus the question must be asked and answered, What impression of Christianity are they likely to form from watching our conduct, from observing our actions, and listening to our speech?

What an immense amount of imperfect Christianity there is amongst us, even among those who are supposed, and often rightly so, of being really anxious to follow Christ and to promote His purpose in the world! Let me suggest two chief causes for this. First, we seem unable to compute what it must inevitably cost to be a Christian. Yet upon this point we cannot plead ignorance, for upon no subject was Christ at once so explicit and so insistent. There is no lesson He teaches so persistently as that of the need of self-sacrifice. The Christian character may be regarded as an edifice — we rightly speak of character-building; the Christian life is certainly

one of warfare. But the wise Tower Builder, so Christ teaches us, will carefully reckon the cost of what he would erect; and the One Going to War will calculate whether the forces at his command are sufficient to meet and overthrow the enemy. Thus the question arises, What are we prepared to spend? Or, in other words, What is the greatness of the sacrifice we are ready and willing to make? The saying, that a thing is worth just what it costs, is as true of our Christianity as of any other of our possessions. Yet how little has our Christianity cost many of us in the past, and how equally little does it cost us in the present! How easily and glibly, for instance, we repeat the Creed! But how little thought and study have many of us given to the deep and solemn propositions or convictions which it expresses! How little heed have many of us paid to the apostolic exhortation which bids us be ready to give to every man a reason for the faith that is in us! Can we call that a conviction which, instead of being arrived at by a process of study, thought, and careful reasoning (certainly a costly process), has been lightly accepted (with no cost at all to ourselves), but simply because others accept it, *e.g.* because we have been brought up in a family or in an ecclesiastical atmosphere where it is the custom

to accept it? If our faith has cost us no more than this, can we wonder that many of us seem to be so ready, at least temporarily, to part with it? In other words, can we be surprised that our conduct so frequently contradicts what we profess to be our faith? The reason for this contradiction — a form of inconsistency upon which the opponents of Christianity are always ready to seize, and over which they delight to make merry—the reason for this contradiction is that there is no *vital* connection between our faith and our practice. I do not use the word vital here as merely a convenient superlative. I infer that we have given no part of our life—and study, thought, and reasoning are vital processes—for our faith. What we profess to be our faith may well be likened to the piece of new cloth put upon the old garment. It is merely an addition to our life, it is an incongruous patch upon our natural self.

Then how little our Christianity is apt to cost us in the present. What real self-sacrifice do we ever make for it? How rarely do some people deny themselves anything they really wish to take part in or enjoy, because to take part in it would be inconsistent with their profession of Christianity! The very little which their Christianity costs others is revealed by the proportion

of their expenditure upon it. Perhaps it was at least partly on this account that Christ saw the difficulty of the rich in entering the Kingdom of Heaven. There are thousands of both men and women who call themselves Christians who spend a hundred times more upon personal luxuries or upon satisfying the claims of a fashionable social standard than they do upon objects which are directly dear to the heart of Christ. Such people have only to compare the amount of their subscriptions to Foreign Missions or to hospital work with the amount they spend upon luxuries, which are in no sense of the word necessaries, in order to prove this. Now the poor notice all this, and the critical outsider notices it. And neither the one nor the other sees any evidence in these rich people of any real self-sacrifice for the sake of Christianity. When did we hear of a man giving up his carriage and pair in order to devote the cost of this to the cause of Foreign Missions? Have we often known of a woman—a professing Christian—denying herself a purchase of jewellery in order to give the money to a cottage hospital which in some village is badly needed? This want of self-sacrifice does not by any means always arise from pure selfishness; it frequently arises from a want of ability to realise how great is

the self-sacrifice which a genuine Christianity demands.

There is of course a darker and more terrible form of inconsistency than even these, and one which to-day is doing incalculable harm to the progress of Christianity. It is the inconsistency between a profession of faith made in God's House on the Sunday, and a habitual wrong treatment of men and women (for whom Christ died) in the interests of "business" during the week. The danger of treating men and women as mere instruments for making money and of forgetting that these same men and women are actually "ends in themselves" is, owing to the pressure of commercial competition, extremely great. But so to treat them is undoubtedly inconsistent with a profession of Christian discipleship. And as we lament, and rightly lament, the wide estrangement which undoubtedly exists between the so-called "working classes" and Christianity to-day, we must remember that this is certainly the most prolific of all its causes.

If only we could realise more fully this truth, that "It is hard to be a Christian," a truth upon which the New Testament insists more frequently than we are apt to remember, there would be far less inconsistency than exists at the present time. A consistent Christian life must come

from within, it must come from an entire devotion to Christ, from a constant seeking of His strength, from a constant communion with His Spirit. Only thus can we lead that life of daily self-discipline by which our lower nature becomes subdued to the higher, and so we become able to act habitually according to the inspiration and guidance of God.

XIX

CHRIST AND JUDGMENT

"To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."—ST. JOHN xviii. 37.

"What then shall I do unto Jesus which is called Christ?"—ST. MATT. xxvii. 22.

THE Lord Jesus Christ is the first speaker; Pilate is the second. I want now to consider these two sayings together, for they were spoken on the same occasion. It was a very memorable occasion. Pilate and Jesus were face to face; Pilate as the supreme judge of a final court, as the representative of the Roman Empire, the greatest of world powers; Jesus Christ as the representative of the Greatest of spiritual powers, as the representative of God. And this same Jesus Christ was to be judged by Pilate, for He was then a prisoner in the power, or rather within the sphere of the authority of Pilate.

Let us try to realise what each represented. We will take the Roman official judge first.

Pilate represented external and material things as they were. He represented what we term "vested interests." He wanted no change; at the same time he probably felt that his position was by no means secure. He was anxious at all costs to retain that position—at least until he obtained a better one—and he knew that to run counter to public opinion was the way to jeopardise it. He had no wish to judge Jesus: certainly he did not wish to condemn Him. He heartily wished he had never been compelled to have anything to do with Him. Had Pilate not been under the influence of the Jews surrounding him, he would probably have told Jesus to go back to the carpenter's shop at Nazareth and to leave preaching alone; he would have told Him that His ideas evidently inflamed the passions of the people, and His conduct might end in a breach of the peace.

But unfortunately for himself Pilate was under a good many influences on this occasion. He was part of a very complicated system. His actions neither began nor ended with himself. A great many people were watching and influencing him, and many important material interests —his own first of all—might depend upon his action. What of that unanimous shout which almost deafened him a few minutes ago, and

which still rang in his ears, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend"? Clearly, if Pilate attempted to do justice in this particular case he would be charged with treason against the existing order—not a pleasant thought for one who was most anxious to stand well with people of influence, that is, with those who could very materially either further or damage his worldly prospects.

Now let us turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. The words of the text describe simply and briefly, yet quite comprehensively, His life's purpose. He was in the world to witness to the truth: for that He lived, worked, taught, and would die. He came to reveal the truth, to do the truth, to express in word and life the truth, which has been described as "all that is absolute and eternal amid changing phenomena." But I think that there is a simpler definition of the truth than that, namely, the "perfect."

We speak of people in any position or capacity or relation as true when they are what our conscience, at its best, tells us that they ought to be, and when they do what they ought to do. And as we study the life of the Incarnate Saviour, in all its fulness and in every detail, what is that life but a revelation of what ought to be, an expression of what ought to be done.

Jesus standing before Pilate is *the truth waiting for judgment.* Remember that judgment, some kind of judgment, must inevitably follow a revelation of truth. It cannot be otherwise. By an inexorable law, where truth comes before us, we must accept it or reject it; neutrality towards it is impossible. "For judgment"—to provoke it, ensure it, compel it—Christ the Truth "came into the world." Have you ever watched judgment inevitably proceeding wherever the Lord Jesus Christ is, wherever and whenever He is revealed? Take the last few days of His ministry, especially the last few hours preceding His crucifixion. We cannot help seeing, as we study these, how the real nature of men and words and actions is made plain: we cannot help seeing more than this, namely, how all the time judgment is following revelation. We cannot fail to notice how Annas and Caiaphas, how the chief priests and the rulers, how Herod and Pilate, how even Peter and his fellow-disciples, are all brought before the bar of judgment, how in every case judgment follows revelation. *Where Christ is judgment is inevitable.* This is my message to you now. This is why the chief task, the chief object of the preacher must be to bring Christ before men, to reveal Him so that men must see Him and judge

Him. When Christ is revealed to us, we can no more refuse to judge Him than Pilate could. By each one of us the question in the text must be answered in deed—in our life and conduct—if not in word, "What shall I do unto Jesus?" The answer to that question is our judgment of Christ.

Notice how during the hours preceding the crucifixion the *apparent* position of all the chief actors is actually reversed. Apparently, Annas and Caiaphas, the chief priests, Herod and Pilate, even the mob—*apparently* these are the judges. But *actually* only Jesus and no one else is judging. And what a commentary it all is upon two sayings of His—first, "I judge no man"; secondly, "For judgment came I into the world"! He utters no word of judgment, yet in His presence, before Him, every one is inevitably judged, and also condemned. And as we read the whole story in the light of the nineteen hundred years of history and experience which separate its events from ourselves, a third saying, attributed to Jesus, comes into our minds, "Where are thine accusers?" They are there, condemned, impaled, and execrated by the universal judgment of mankind.

The words of both my texts are constantly being spoken. Heard or unheard, heeded or

unheeded, they are constantly being addressed to each one of us. Those of the first text are addressed to us by the Church, which represents Jesus Christ, by all the various ministrations of religion, by every one and everything that reminds us of Christianity. The words of the second text are spoken to us by our own conscience, by the voice of judgment within us. The professing Christian says, "I believe in Jesus Christ." As we make this profession of faith, Jesus, recognised or unrecognised, stands before us. Do we realise what this profession means, what it implies? We, in virtue of our knowledge, our conscience, our feelings, our will,—powers which have been given to us from above, powers whose exercise we can no more abrogate than Pilate could refuse to try Jesus,—we, in virtue of our possession of these powers, stand in the position of judges. Jesus says to us as He said to Pilate, "To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." And whether we will or not, we have to answer the question asked by Pilate, "What shall I do unto Jesus?" How shall I treat Him? What shall be the nature of my conduct towards Him? In virtue of our human nature we have been endowed by God with the ability to appreciate right and truth, and with the means to condemn

the wrong and the false. And at heart we wish to do right; but I fear that actually we often fail to do it, unless we can do it without any personal inconvenience or material loss to ourselves. Even Pilate would do that. He was obliged to confess, "I find no fault in Him at all." Our conscience says, I should listen to, I should obey Jesus, because to do this is to follow the highest and best I can conceive. But we are not alone. Like Pilate, we are often placed in very difficult positions; as parts of a complex whole we are often in very difficult circumstances. To treat Jesus as we know we ought to treat Him may involve us in many difficulties which we prefer to shun. It may mean doing many things which are extremely unpleasant. Let us consider some of these.

In every case it will mean giving up all forms of selfishness.

(1) In the family, in the home circle. There we must exercise self-discipline and self-denial. We must not spend our money or our time chiefly on self-gratification, for we are the followers of One "Who pleased not Himself," of One Who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Here is the ideal life, the true life, to which Jesus in His own conduct bore witness, and which my conscience, as it judges me, tells me

is the true life for man. Jesus stands for all forms of unselfishness. What shall we do unto Him?

(2) We pass out of the sphere of home into that of our work, or business, or profession. Daily, almost hourly, there we have to sit in the seat of judgment, and make all kinds of decisions. And all round us are people considering simply their own interests, just as the chief priests and elders did. If we act like them, and consider only what, from a worldly point of view, is advantageous to ourselves, we must put Jesus away. We cannot listen to them and to Him. To-day men are telling us that business and religion are best kept apart; each may be good in its proper place, but we must not mix them. And if any one, like a clergyman, ventures even to suggest that no sphere of life should be closed to Christianity, to high principles, to what our conscience tells us is right, he is told that he does not know what he is talking about, he does not understand the conditions under which business *must* be done to-day, if it is to be done at all. But in this sphere, also, Jesus stands before us "for judgment," and witnesses not for the many falsehoods and deceits euphemistically called "trade customs"; here, as elsewhere, He witnesses, He pleads with us for the truth. How shall He and His witness be treated?

(3) Many of us must be conscious that not far from us are large numbers of people living in poverty, who are without what is necessary even to maintain life as it should be lived. This poverty, we may be told, is mainly the result of their intemperance, extravagance, want of management, and want of forethought. This may be true without its being the whole truth. All those evils are results as well as causes. For we know only too well that under the conditions of modern industry the enriching of a few does sometimes seem to involve the impoverishment of many. As we contemplate this poverty, do we not hear the comprehensive, sympathetic words of Jesus, "I have compassion on the multitude"? Between them and ourselves rises the figure of Jesus, who says, "Give ye them to eat," do what you can, however small your resources, to supply their urgent needs. Moreover, remember that Jesus identifies Himself with them. "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto Me." And Jesus speaks about bearing witness to the truth, and in our conscience we feel that if we are true to the promptings of love, sympathy, compassion—yea, even of justice—which God has implanted in us, we must listen and obey. But we are not alone, we are, like Pilate, parts of a

complicated system; around us are all kinds of vested interests. We have even been told with brutal frankness that the fluctuations and exigencies of trade demand a margin of unemployed workers—in other words, of hungry and half-clad men and women and children. If we begin to ally ourselves with schemes of social reform we may lose popularity with those towards whom it is to our worldly interest to stand well. What shall we do unto Jesus?

Again and again we must answer this question in this very connection, that is in our treatment of those who need. By what we give we commit an act of judgment. If we give what we can afford—but how often do we give that?—we judge Jesus to be of value. If we give less we reveal to God and ourselves that we regard Him, His influence, His teaching, His example, as of little practical importance. Jesus will not judge us for what we give or for what we withhold. There is no need for Him to do that. By what we give or withhold we judge ourselves—we reveal to ourselves our real estimate of the value of Christianity as a factor, as a power in life.

(4) We are citizens and Englishmen. As such we have various responsibilities towards the town, the district, the country in which we live.

We have heard Jesus say, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." We may try to promote a thoroughly Christian spirit in our household, we may manage our own business with scrupulous honesty, we may go to church regularly on a Sunday, and even try to induce others to go. Yet we hear the words "Render to Caesar," where "Caesar" stands for the government, the civil power, local or national. We know that the welfare of a community largely depends on those who are finally responsible for its management, and for the administration of its laws; and we probably know of many things around us which are not what they ought to be. We hear the words about bearing witness to the truth. And there is such a one as the true citizen, the true subject. Such a one is not content to grumble when he ought to work. He knows that as much depends upon the stability of the outward framework of society as upon the stability of the framework of the house in which he lives. But between him and possibly some very unpleasant and thankless work there stands the figure of Jesus, saying, "That I should bear witness to the truth." A great teacher on the subject of Christian citizenship has drawn for us the following graphic picture:—A man comes

home after a hard day's work at business or in his profession. He is greeted by a warm and comfortable family room and pleasant family faces, while outside it is cold and wet, and at the Town Hall or the Municipal Buildings there is a committee of probably very unreasonable people. But what is he to say to the words, "He pleased not Himself"? As he hovers between comfort and duty the standard of Jesus is judging him.

"For judgment came I into this world." Judgment, I repeat once more, must issue from the presence of Christ. Not that He judges us. In each case which we have considered we have seen that He compels us to judge—to acquit or condemn—ourselves by our own conduct, which is our practical confession of faith or of unbelief in Him.

We cannot plead ignorance; even a slight knowledge of Christ precludes us from making that excuse. As a great modern scholar has written, "No one who has once absorbed a ray of Christ's light can ever again become as though he had never heard of Him." "If I had not spoken unto them they had not had sin: now have they no excuse for their sin;" and the want of belief in Christ, and of what that belief implies, lies at the root of all sin.

Oh, do remember that it is by our conduct—

by what we *do* unto Jesus—that we judge ourselves! But all the time to us, as He did to the Jews of old, Jesus is bearing witness to the truth, the ideal, to that which we *ought* to do. We can choose Him and this, or we can choose something less and something lower. Whether we will or not, we must each of us answer the question—"What shall I do unto Jesus?"

He stands before us waiting our judgment. In the stupendous mysteriousness of God's message of salvation He actually needs our help to enable Him to do His work. Oh, what shall we do—rather what shall we not be ready to do—not only unto but for Jesus, and so for those for whom He died?

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